

Tests

ENERGY DRINKS

WASHING MACHINES

CHOICE

Independent information for smart consumers



MOISTURISERS

with sunscreen: 30 on test

NEW DRUGS

Patients as guinea pigs?

SUGAR

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Money madness

It's always amazing how two products with the same function can have an enormous difference in cost. Cosmetics tend to be an extreme illustration of this, as the moisturisers with sunscreen reported on this month (page 9) demonstrate.

For the same amount of moisturiser (50 mL/50 g) we found products ranging in price from 69 cents to \$106. You might find it surprising that the scores of the cheapest and most expensive products (as rated by our trialists) were so close that the difference is insignificant: 62% and 64% respectively. For all with experience of CHOICE findings, however, it was no surprise at all.

The manufacturers might argue that some of the difference relates to the ingredients of the more expensive product being of better 'quality' — whatever that means in this context. But in fact it's most likely that what you're paying for is the name: the supposed prestige of using a posh brand, and the money it costs the company to market that name and keep its upmarket image intact.

But really, what's the point of spending all that money when our trials show these expensive cosmetics feel no better on many people's skin when they don't know which brand they're using or how much it cost? And if you're concerned about your own image, who else is going to know whether you splashed out \$10 or \$100 for your latest moisturiser, if you don't tell them?

Try out our top-rating moisturisers with sunscreen (\$8–\$30 for 50 mL/50 g) and save your money for something where it might make a real difference.



Jane Mackenzie,
Editor

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

www.CHOICEextra.com.au



The free website exclusive to CHOICE magazine personal subscribers, with a four-year index and links to many articles online.

Look out for the  symbol in magazine articles — it indicates there's extra info on CHOICEextra. This month you have access to our interactive 'choose a washer' tool to help you find the best washing machine for your needs.

To use this free website you'll need to log in with your subscriber number, which is the number directly above your name on the mailing label that comes with the magazine.



All you need is the model name and number you want to buy, the price you want to beat, and your CHOICE subscriber number (from the mailing label with the magazine). CHOICE Shopper is available to personal subscribers only.

Call
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It's hard to find a moisturiser with SPF30+ protection that also feels good on your skin.

Photo: APL

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New water efficiency label

When you're shopping for a washing machine, shower head or other water-using product, you may come across a new water efficiency label. It looks similar to the familiar energy efficiency label on some whitegoods and air conditioners, showing a star rating (one to six, with six being the best) and a water consumption figure (see top right).

The label allows you to easily compare the water efficiency of products before you buy, so you can make it part of your purchase decision. Efficient products will help you save water and (when you're using hot water) energy — and therefore money. The label will also be an incentive for manufacturers to improve the water efficiency of their products.

Products carrying the label have been tested and rated according to a new water efficiency standard, and are registered with a national regulator. All registered products go into a database, and you can compare them online at www.waterrating.gov.au.

However, at this point the label is still voluntary, and it's likely to take some time until the database contains a wide range of models. It'll

become mandatory for all new domestic washing machines, dishwashers, showers, toilets, urinals and most taps from 1 June 2006. The existing voluntary AAAAA-label (see below right) will be phased out at the same time.

Australia is the world's driest inhabited continent, yet our per-capita water consumption is among the highest — about 350 litres per day. Water shortages and the long-term security of our water supply are increasing concerns.

Water-efficient products can dramatically reduce your household's consumption. For example:

- An efficient washing machine may use only one third of the water of an inefficient model. When using a warm or hot wash program, it'll also save you energy.
- Standard shower heads can use up to 25 L per minute, a water-efficient one as little as 6 L — saving a lot of water and energy.
- An older-style single-flush toilet may use 12 L per flush, whereas modern dual-flush models use only 6 L for a full flush and 3 L for a half.

The more stars the more water efficient

WATER RATING

A joint government and industry program
Simons, Searns, Sherrin, Sherrin Model 55130
Load capacity 4 kg

Water Consumption

50

Litres per wash
avg. Normal program

When used in accordance with Simons, Searns, Sherrin Model 55130

For more information and to compare appliances, refer to:
www.waterrating.gov.au

Type Tested
Lic: XXXXX

Water Conservation Rating

AAA
AA

WATER SERVICES ASSOCIATION of Australia

Can you help?

HOLIDAY HOMES

Our sister magazine, *CHOICE Money & Rights*, would like to hear from you if you have or used to have a holiday home.

Please tell us how you decided on the property and what experiences you've had — for example, whether you rent out the home for part of the year or use it exclusively yourself, and whether the property has increased in value or you made a capital gain on selling it.

Please write to **Holiday homes** at *CHOICE Money & Rights*, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or email holidayhomes@choice.com.au.

CORRECTION

MULTIVITAMINS

CHOICE, June 2005

The values in the potassium column in the table (page 17) are incorrect. The multivitamins listed all contain less than 1% of the recommended daily intake of potassium. This means that **CENTRUM Complete from A to Zinc** has an incorrect score and shouldn't have been included in the *Best Value* box on page 16. The scores for the rest of the multivitamins remain the same.

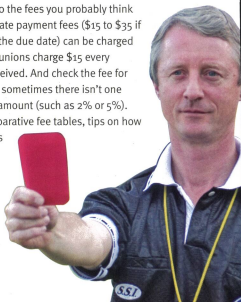
WATCH OUT FOR CREDIT CARD FEES

The last five years have seen huge jumps in credit card penalty fees. So how can you avoid them?

Apart from the obvious (paying on time and avoiding going over your credit limit), check what happens if you underpay your bill. *CHOICE Money & Rights* reported that one customer who underpaid his \$1717 bill by just 10 cents capped daily interest on all new purchases made after the statement due date as a result — his interest-free period was forfeited. The interest charge, which amounted to over \$28, was subsequently reversed after *Money & Rights* contacted the bank on the customer's behalf. If your card provider applies interest in this way, make sure you pay in full by the due date to avoid daily interest.

There can also be wrinkles to the fees you probably think you know about. For example, late payment fees (\$15 to \$35 if you don't pay the minimum by the due date) can be charged more than once — some credit unions charge \$15 every seven days until payment is received. And check the fee for spending over your credit limit: sometimes there isn't one until you exceed it by a certain amount (such as 2% or 5%).

For more case studies, comparative fee tables, tips on how to avoid bank account penalties and an upcoming feature on credit card traps, subscribe to *CHOICE Money & Rights*. Call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.



Smoke alarms save lives

At the start of winter in NSW, devastating house fires claimed 13 lives, including seven children, in just over a fortnight. The tragedies prompted the NSW government to fast-track the introduction of new legislation to make smoke alarms mandatory in all homes, including rental properties, by 1 May 2006. While it's unlikely inspectors will visit every home, owners will have to certify when selling their property that smoke alarms are installed.

The proposed legislation will bring NSW in line with Victoria and SA, where all homes, not just newly built ones or major renovations, have to be fitted with smoke alarms.

Having a properly working smoke alarm can prevent loss of life in a house fire, providing the early warning you need to get yourself and your family out to safety. So install smoke alarms if your home is still without them. They can either be hard-wired to your mains power supply (and have a battery back-up) or battery-operated. The latter type is easy to install and generally cheaper; the former is considered more reliable in the long term but must be installed by a licensed electrician.

Plenty of information about smoke alarms and general fire safety is available online from the states' fire and/or building services. The most important points about smoke alarms include:

- Every house should have enough alarms installed on every level — at least one outside sleeping areas and one on each additional level.
- Smoke alarms should comply with Australian Standard AS3786. To check whether they do, you can look for the 'five ticks' StandardsMark or check with the CSIRO. It tests alarms and other fire protection equipment to the relevant standard and lists them in the 'ActivFire Register of Fire Protection Equipment' on its website (www.activfire.gov.au). According to the CSIRO, most major manufacturers have their equipment tested this way.
- Test your smoke alarms at least monthly and clean them regularly.
- Replace batteries at least once a year — alarms with low batteries leave you unprotected.
- Replace smoke alarms as recommended in the manufacturer's warranty — they have a limited lifespan (around 10 years in normal circumstances).

UPDATES

30% CHILDCARE REBATE

CHOICE CUTS, July 2005

For more information about the childcare rebate, contact the Australian Tax Office (ATO) on 132 861 (or www.ato.gov.au), rather than the Family Assistance Office (FAO) as printed in the article. The FAO website has information about the rebate and eligibility requirements, but they'd prefer consumers to call the ATO.

VACUUM CLEANERS

CHOICE, July 2005

While the MIELE S 726 Cat & Dog 700 and S 758 Active HEPA+ Seb 217 (both in the *What to buy list*) don't come with a blower facility (as noted), an optional blower is available. It comprises a blower plate (part no. 5109310, \$16.50) and an adaptor (part no. 5751130, \$4.60), available via the MIELE spare parts division.

If you're sensitive to household dust, an Active HEPA filter is available as an optional extra for the Cat & Dog model (part no. 4854915, \$49.50).

Home phone text messaging

Text messaging (sending and receiving SMS) has come to your home phone — if Telstra is your local call provider, that is. The service currently doesn't work with other providers, but this is likely to change in the near future.

You don't have to specifically sign up for the service, and there aren't any connection or rental charges. Sending an SMS from a landline phone costs 25 cents.

■ **If you don't have an SMS-capable phone:** You'll receive SMS sent to you from a Telstra mobile phone or an SMS-capable landline phone as a voice message. A computer program ('talking text') converts the SMS into speech, your phone rings, and whoever picks it up will hear the message.

If no one answers the call, the message will be left on your answering machine or voicemail. If you don't have voicemail, the service will call again later — for up to seven days.

You can reply to the message using up to three out of seven predefined answers allocated to your phone's number keys.

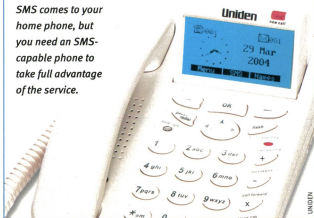
■ **If you have an SMS-capable phone:** You receive messages as text on its display just as you would on your mobile (see below).

You can reply using one of the predefined answers, or compose your own message using your keypad similarly to how it's done with mobile phones.

What else should I know?

- When sending a message, your number will be sent as well — even if you have a silent number or caller ID restriction.
- Keep in mind that an SMS sent to a landline isn't necessarily private — anyone with access to the phone may pick it up.
- By default, talking text messages won't be delivered between midnight and 8 am. But you can change those times or remove that limit completely by calling 0198 339 999.
- The talking text software can read English, common SMS abbreviations and emoticons.

SMS comes to your home phone, but you need an SMS-capable phone to take full advantage of the service.



Are you converted?

Reader Carol Fry was perturbed when she discovered a bag of carrots labelled "organic" that she'd bought was in fact produced by a farm "undergoing conversion to full organic status". The printing of the qualifier was a lot less prominent on the packaging than the "organic" label.

"I'm annoyed because I thought I was buying and paying for certified organic produce. In my mind, the carrots are either organic or they're not. Did I pay double the price for food that contains a little bit of synthetic fertiliser, pesticides and herbicides, rather than a lot?"

It takes farmers at least three years to become fully certified. In their first year of organic farming, producers can't use the organic certification logo on their produce. It can be a tough year — they may well make less money as they change over to organic production, and they can't claim a premium on the price. The first year's called 'pre-conversion'.

The second and third years (pending the farm successfully meeting soil test, land management, record-keeping and other relevant requirements) are designated 'in conversion', and farmers can sell produce with this level of organic certification. Consumers can be confident that it's been at least one year since any synthetic chemicals were used on the produce or land, and that the farmer has sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices in place.



If you're buying organic because you're concerned about swallowing synthetic chemicals, you've probably little to worry about with this (or in fact most other) produce. Pesticide monitoring in Australia tends to find that levels are low and within prescribed safety limits, even for conventionally farmed foods. Furthermore, even fully organic foods can be susceptible to spray drift and other forms of contamination, so it's no iron-clad guarantee.

If you buy organic because you support sustainable, environmentally friendly farming practices, by buying from 'in conversion' farmers you're giving them an income — and morale — boost.

Fire retardant hazard

They're found in products such as computers, televisions, mobile phones, carpets and foam mattresses. Polybrominated diphenylethers, or PBDEs, are brominated flame retardants that prevent electronic goods bursting into flames and impede the spread of fire. While fire protection is important, there's concern that PBDEs are a health hazard.

Deposits of PBDEs have been found throughout homes, schools and offices in dust from electronic goods. They have an accumulative effect — the more exposure we have to them, the more they mount up in our bloodstream, fatty tissues and in breastmilk.

A recent study commissioned by the Federal Government examined the level of PBDEs in Australian mothers' breastmilk. While lower than North American levels (the highest in the world), Australian mothers' breastmilk was found to have levels of these compounds five times higher than European and Japanese women. (Don't let this stop you breastfeeding — it's still the best food for babies.)

The Department of Environment and Heritage says this level's low, the National Toxics Network considers it comparatively high, and in Greenpeace Australia's opinion any level is unacceptable. The bottom line is that we don't know what a safe level of exposure is.

In laboratory animals PBDEs have been shown to interfere with thyroid hormone levels, affect reproduction and harm brain development, causing learning, memory and behavioural problems.

Two groups of PBDEs have already been banned in Europe, with the EU in the process of creating new legislation to control the chemicals in flame retardants. Both Greenpeace and the National Toxics Network are calling for PBDEs to be banned and replaced with safer alternatives that are already obtainable. CHOICE supports this position.

The Department of Environment and Heritage says it's continuing to conduct studies of flame retardants, the results of which are due at the end of 2005. It says it's also looking at joining



with the EU in banning the use of PBDEs.

If you want to minimise your exposure to PBDEs you'll need to ask manufacturers if their goods contain these compounds. Another way to limit contact is to carefully remove dust, particularly in home offices.

For more information go to www.oztoxics.org/ntn/indexfront.html and click on 'Brominated fire retardants' on the right side of the page.

yourletters

Our June report on domestic airlines prompted more readers to comment on QANTAS and its Frequent Flyer program. Here's a selection.

Points can expire: stay vigilant!

You may want to warn your readers about another piece of small print for QANTAS Frequent Flyer points.

I was saving points for a trip to Hawaii, but hadn't been able to find dates I could fly out and return. At the beginning of May I got a letter from QANTAS telling me all my points were due to expire on 30 June. Not just the oldest points would expire — which would have been annoying but understandable — but all (nearly 120,000) points, gone in one bang. I hadn't had any previous letter telling me this and expect it's somewhere in the fine print of the conditions.

There's no way I can use any of the points and fly at such short notice. Am I a loyal QANTAS customer from now on?

I noticed in the June issue that someone said they were saving points for some purpose and I wouldn't like anyone else to be caught in this very unpleasant trap without warning.

**Margaret Mackisack
Kurrajong, NSW**

Margaret is probably not the only one caught out by the fine print. One of our staff also had problems with 'expiring points' and she, too,

had thought her points would no longer expire since QANTAS made some widely publicised changes to the program a few years ago. The Benefits Guidebook she received on joining the program even has a whole section headed "No expiry date on QANTAS Frequent Flyer points".

However, the fine print reveals the proviso that you have to remain an 'active member' — that is, earn or redeem points on your account at least once every three years. If there's no movement over a 36-month period, it says the points will expire without notice.

While the loss of points still stands, QANTAS told us that from December 2004, Australian and NZ members with a valid email address who have points expiring within the next three and a half months receive expiry notification in the monthly e-newsletter, and those receiving paper statements receive notification within 60 days of points expiry.

So check your statements or e-newsletters regularly for any expiry notice and take note of the 'date of last point activity'. And remember that all you have to do to remain an 'active member' is to have a 'movement' on your Frequent Flyer account. You neither have to use up all your points, nor fly before the points expire.

Fortunately, after sending us her letter, Margaret realised this, booked a flight before the expiry date and saved her points. So if you have points about to expire, book ahead for when you can fly,

or book yourself into an award partner hotel for a night or, if your credit card earns you Frequent Flyer points, use it, or do anything that'll earn or redeem points on your Frequent Flyer account.

Extremely difficult and frustrating

It is extremely difficult and frustrating to secure domestic route seats on dates and at times required. It seems not to matter whether one books a year, six months or two months ahead. On the contrary, it's my experience that it's often easier one week ahead when more Frequent Flyer seats are released, presumably because it's unlikely that all the available seats will then be sold. However, often Frequent Flyer seats are unavailable even when there's a large number of seats available for purchase.

For many people, and especially for business people, not being able to book flights that coincide with conferences and other important events devalues the use of the rewards points significantly.

**Chris Lowden
Beaumont, SA**

Plan ahead

I must take issue with Sandra of Mountain Creek and her complaints about the QANTAS Frequent Flyer program (CHOICE, June 2005). I've been a QANTAS FF for many years and have never had a problem using points for my own or my family's domestic

THUMBS UP!



Diane Sexton, via email, is impressed with OAKLEY South Pacific, which offered to repair for \$50 a pair of \$200 sunglasses she'd bought four years earlier and then, within a week, returned what looked like completely new glasses. "Thumbs up for such a pleasant and fast response."



travel, as long as I plan in advance and avoid the obvious peak times.

I've consistently found that two to three months is sufficient notice, depending on the season, which I don't find unreasonable or restrictive. Even peak times are easily available if I plan well in advance, as I found this week [late June] when I was able to book flights for Christmas Eve.

I take a more pragmatic approach than Sandra and use my points for planned trips and pay for emergency ones. Expecting to get an award flight at short notice is over-optimistic.

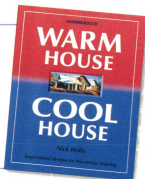
I'm no great lover of QANTAS service or performance over the last few years — they're able to get away with poor service because there's often little competition — but as far as access to award flights is concerned, I have no complaints.

**David de Burgh
Castle Forbes Bay, Tas**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We want to hear from you — your experiences help our research and often let other readers know about scams and rip-offs. To thank you for writing to us, *Your Letters* awards a prize of a CHOICE book to the 'Letter of the month'. This month's winner, Margaret Mackisack of Kurrajong, NSW, receives *Warm House Cool House*, or any other book of her choice from Consumer Bookshelf, pages 47–48.

We're sorry we don't have the resources to answer all your letters personally, and in the magazine we may edit them or print only an extract. See page 2 for how to reach us.



Health funds may not tell you if you're no longer covered

Children under a family membership may be covered for health insurance up to 25 years of age if they remain in full-time study.

The Private Health Insurance Ombudsman (PHIO) noted in his 2004 annual report that he had received a number of complaints about health funds not notifying members when someone had been dropped from membership — and this usually concerned children covered under a family policy.

One case reported by the ombudsman was Mr Irons and his eldest daughter Jarrah (not their real names). The family with their three children had been insured with their fund for over 20 years.

To maintain cover for children over the age of 18 or 21, parents usually have to let the fund know their children are still full-time students. Mr Irons forgot to fill in the paperwork sent by the fund and two months later it removed Jarrah from the

family membership — but didn't notify Mr Irons or Jarrah about it.

Jarrah only found out when she went to the dentist later in the year. By this time she was pregnant, and planning to leave university at the end of the year.

She offered to take up a single policy with the fund, as she wanted her own obstetrician attending the birth at a nearby private hospital. However, it told her that as she hadn't joined within two months of her removal from membership, a 12-month waiting period for obstetrics would apply.

Jarrah complained to the fund and to the ombudsman, saying she would have joined earlier had she known she

was no longer covered. Following the ombudsman's intervention the fund offered to waive all waiting periods. For more information about hospital insurance and a range of new Best Buys, see *CHOICE Money & Rights*, August/September 2005.



GENE ROSS

FREE SUPER BOOKLET

Super Choices.
Think about your future.



The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) has released a free booklet to increase consumer understanding of super and help you make better super choices.

You can download the booklet at www.fido.asic.gov.au or phone 13 28 64 for a copy.

Check www.choice.com.au/ money for a free DIY super quiz.

Debt collection guideline on the way

A guideline explaining the responsibilities of companies and individuals involved in debt collection is planned for release in October by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Covered in the guideline are issues that have previously been contentious, as reported in *CHOICE Money & Rights*, April/May 2004. They include:

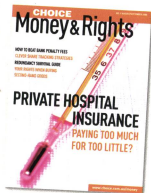
- When, where, how and how often debtors can be contacted.
- Privacy obligations of creditors and debt collection agencies.
- Provisions relating to disadvantaged and non-English speaking debtors.
- Practical guidance on avoiding misleading conduct, unconscionable conduct and the use of harassment and coercion.

While the guideline doesn't have legal force, it provides a clearer explanation of regulators' views on the consumer protection laws they administer (such as the Trade Practices Act and the ASIC Act). It went through rounds of submissions from key players and consumer and industry groups in early to mid-2005.

A brochure for consumers explaining their rights and responsibilities in the area will be released with the guideline.

WANT MORE MONEY INFO?

CHOICE Money & Rights magazine is published six times a year and contains more information on money topics (and your consumer rights) than we could ever fit into *CHOICE*. To subscribe call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.



Daily defence

Facial moisturisers with sun protection — we find the cream of the crop.

It's not just at the beach that you need to protect your skin from the sun. You're exposed to potentially harmful rays every day, from the moment you walk outside. So if you use a daily moisturiser on your face, you might want to go for one that provides sun protection as well, rather than applying two separate products. Not only will it help prevent your skin from drying out, it can help prevent sunburn and photo-aging too.

Our trialists checked out 30 brands of facial moisturiser with sunscreen to see which ones rated best from a cosmetic point of view. We didn't ask trialists to assess their sun protection, as all products with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 4 or more are regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and must conform to the relevant Australian standard.

PRICE NO GUARANTEE

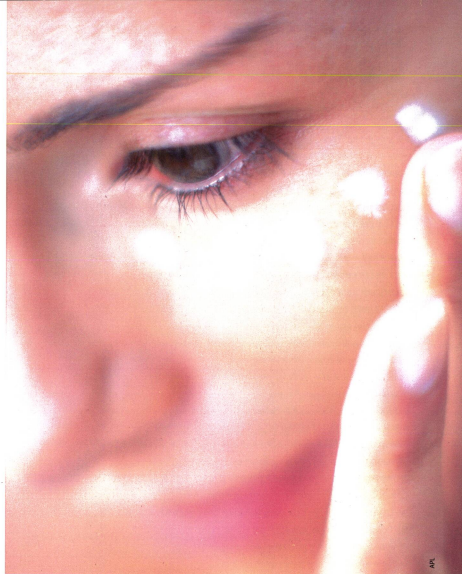
You can spend a small fortune on a moisturiser with sunscreen — boutique brands CHANEL, YVES SAINT LAURENT and CLINIQUE all cost \$90 or more per 50 mL; or comparatively small change — CLASSICS Daily Moisturising Cream is just 69 cents for 50 g. In our trial, though, price wasn't a good indicator of how well they rated, as the table, page 10, shows.

The products that rated best overall also tended to rate well for fragrance, texture and absorption, and received the best ratings for how well trialists thought they worked as a moisturiser. And four of the top five also cost less than \$30 for 50 mL or 50 g.

FACTOR IT IN

Moisturisers with sunscreen can help protect you from the sun, but experts advise the following:

- When choosing a moisturiser containing sunscreen, pick one labelled with an SPF of 15 or more, and check to see it's well within its use-by date.
- Apply enough to achieve the SPF protection



claimed on the label. As a guide, the recommended amount for sunscreen is a half teaspoon for the face, neck and ears. It will wear off during the day, particularly if you're sweating, so you'll need to reapply it to retain sun protection.

■ Don't use a moisturiser with SPF to extend the amount of time you spend in the sun. Like sunscreens, it should be used in conjunction with other sun protection measures such as clothing, hats, sunglasses and shade.

■ For best sun protection you need a moisturiser that's SPF 30+ or to apply a broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen under your daily moisturiser. Unfortunately none of the four brands with this SPF was rated particularly well by the trialists. It could be that the more sunscreens ingredient(s) a product contains, the more they detract from the product's desirable cosmetic properties. If you want to try a moisturiser with SPF 30+, JURLIQUE Sun Lotion was rated the highest.

Some moisturisers are labelled 'contains UV filters' but have no stated SPF value, so you don't know how much sun protection they provide. The amount may be negligible, so to be safe when using one, use an additional sunscreen if you're going out in the sun.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ **On trial: 30 facial moisturisers with sunscreen, ranging in price from 69 cents to \$106 per 50 mL or g. Our results show price is no indication of how much you'll like a particular product.**

■ **Most moisturisers on trial have an SPF of 15 or more, which is about the minimum SPF experts consider adequate. If you spend a lot of time out in the sun 30+ is recommended, but none of those with this level of sun protection was liked much as a moisturiser.**

1 Brand / product name (pack size)

DOVE Essential Nutrients Protective Day Cream (50 mL)	70	76	74	69	83	15
L'ORÉAL Visible Results Daily Skin Perfecting Moisturiser (50 mL)	70	76	72	68	83	15
OLAY Total Effects+ UV Protection Cream (50 g)	68	76	69	54	86	15
LANCÔME Vinéfit Complete Energising Moisturiser (50 mL)	67	70	73	63	79	15
TOTAL-E CREAM MOISTURISING CREAM with Sunscreen (75 g) (A)	65	69	67	68	78	20
CHANEL Precision Age Delay Time Fighting Rejuvenation Cream (50 mL)	64	71	68	65	76	15
SIMPLE Replenishing Rich Moisturiser (125 mL)	64	70	67	53	83	'UV filters
THE CANCER COUNCIL AUSTRALIA Moisturising Face Cream (100 mL)	64	64	61	66	70	15
BEAUTICIAN'S SECRET All Day Moisturising Lotion (50 mL)	63	67	67	55	78	'UV filters
ESTÉE LAUDER Daywear Plus Multi Protection Anti-Oxidant Creme (50 mL)	63	67	71	66	75	15
NEUTROGENA Moisture Defense Cream (50 mL)	63	71	70	63	79	15
CLASSICS Daily Moisturising Cream (250 g)	62	66	66	66	77	15
-H₂O+ Aquafirm Optimizing Lotion (47 mL)	62	71	67	58	74	15
YVES SAINT LAURENT Hydra Tech Optimum Hydration Creme (50 mL)	62	66	71	68	71	8
BLOOM Hydrating Day Cream (100 mL)	60	69	69	58	84	8
GARNIER Skin Naturals Fresh 24 hr Hydrating Day Cream (75 mL)	59	61	60	69	77	'UV filter'
JURLIQUE Sun Lotion (100 mL) (B)	59	64	63	54	73	30+
L'OCCITANE Daily Face Cream (50 mL)	59	69	60	64	71	15
SHISEIDO The Skincare Day Protective Moisturiser (40 mL)	58	62	55	52	71	15
REDWIN Daily Facial Crème Vitamin E & Jojoba Oil (270 mL)	57	61	66	58	79	'Sunscreens
CLINIQUE Superdefense Triple Action Moisturiser (50 mL)	56	60	58	51	68	25
NIVEA VISAGE Optimal Protection Daily Moisturiser with A Alpha Flavon (50 mL)	56	64	59	56	77	15
MD FORMULATIONS Sun Total Age Protector (100 mL)	55	58	48	47	65	30+
CLARINS Moisture Quenching Hydra-Balance Lotion (50 mL)	54	59	56	50	75	15
KOSMEA AUSTRALIA Moisturising Lotion (50 mL)	54	56	54	46	72	30+
JOHN PLUNKETT Classic Anti Wrinkle Protective Day Moisturiser (60 g)	53	55	54	48	60	25
DERMALOGICA Sheer Moisture (44 mL)	49	53	53	41	62	15
ELIZABETH ARDEN Daily Moisture Lotion (50 mL)	49	60	44	48	80	15
INNOXA Micro-Moist with Vitamins A, C & E (75 mL)	49	56	53	50	65	20
ULTRACEUTICALS Protective Daily Moisturiser (100 mL)	40	51	42	45	57	30+

(A) Available at pharmacies Australia-wide.

(B) Despite its name, this is a separate product from Jurlique's range of sunscreens. It's a 'crossover' product providing a combined moisturiser and sunscreen.

1 Brand/product

Our trial included products that are primarily face moisturisers designed for everyday use, with added sunscreen. Where a product was available in both a cream and a lotion, we chose the cream. Products specifically for mature skin and those for excessively dry or oily skin were excluded from the trial.

2 Ratings

For each moisturiser they tried, trialists rated how much they liked the fragrance and the texture, how well the moisturiser was absorbed, and how well they thought the product worked for them as a moisturiser (we've labelled this 'performance' in the table). They then gave the moisturiser a separate overall rating, taking these four qualities and any other factors into account.

2 RATINGS

Overall score (%)	Performance score (%)	Texture score (%)	Fragrance score (%)	Absorption score (%)	3 SPF
70	76	74	69	83	15
70	76	72	68	83	15
68	76	69	54	86	15
67	70	73	63	79	15
65	69	67	68	78	20
64	71	68	65	76	15
64	70	67	53	83	'UV filters
64	64	61	66	70	15
63	67	67	55	78	'UV filters
63	67	71	66	75	15
63	71	70	63	79	15
62	66	66	66	77	15
62	71	67	58	74	15
62	66	71	68	71	8
60	69	69	58	84	8
59	61	60	69	77	'UV filter'
59	64	63	54	73	30+
59	69	60	64	71	15
58	62	55	52	71	15
57	61	66	58	79	'Sunscreens
56	60	58	51	68	25
56	64	59	56	77	15
55	58	48	47	65	30+
54	59	56	50	75	15
54	56	54	46	72	30+
53	55	54	48	60	25
49	53	53	41	62	15
49	60	44	48	80	15
49	56	53	50	65	20
40	51	42	45	57	30+

The overall score for each product was most closely related to the score trialists gave for moisturising performance, followed by texture, and to a lesser extent fragrance and absorption. The ratings don't take into account suncreening properties.

3 SPF

The sun protection factor (SPF) is the value shown on the product label. Currently, moisturisers containing SPF4 or higher are defined as secondary sunscreens and classified as therapeutic goods. They're regulated by the TGA and must conform to the relevant Australian standard. Those less than SPF4 need only be labelled under the Cosmetic Regulations.

Some products are labelled 'contains UV filters' or 'contains sunscreen', with no stated SPF value, so the sun protection they provide is unknown.

4 Price per 50 mL/g

Moisturiser pack sizes vary, so for comparison we calculated the price per 50 mL/g, based on what we paid in Sydney in March/April 2005 for the size closest to 50 mL/g.



WHAT TO BUY

BEST OVERALL DOVE ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS PROTECTIVE DAY CREAM SPF15

Price for 50 mL: \$10.99

TRIALIST COMMENTS

"Subtle fragrance, nice to apply, leaves a pleasant sensation and my skin felt moisturised all day."

"Loved the smell and it left my skin feeling really smooth."

L'ORÉAL VISIBLE RESULTS DAILY SKIN PERFECTING MOISTURISER SPF15

Price for 50 mL: \$26.95

TRIALIST COMMENTS

"Absorbed really easily and my skin felt moisturised immediately."

"My skin felt nice the whole time."

GOOD VALUE, MORE PROTECTION TOTAL-E CREAM MOISTURISING CREAM WITH SUNSCREEN SPF20

Price for 50 g: \$7.97

BEST BUY

TRIALIST COMMENTS

"Applied nicely. Absorbed straightaway. Made skin feel soft."

"Skin felt moisturised/protected for the day."



3 FREE magazines!

See over for details



The trial

Thanks to the CHOICE Home Testers who exposed their turisurs ranging from the 'atery' or 'gluggy' to the (much 'y', 'smooth' or 'silky'.

248 Home Testers (including 22 e 30 moisturisers for us. Each i six different moisturisers — in tainers, so they wouldn't know ey were using. They tried each onsecutive days on their cheeks ileted a survey form rating each rage each product was tried by

Bay of plenty

Buying and selling on the biggest online marketplace in the world, eBay.



IN A NUTSHELL

■ eBay is an online bazaar that lets you buy and sell all kinds of different items. It has millions of satisfied customers, but you need to know the rules to use it safely.

■ Be careful of email scammers claiming to be eBay, with the aim of stealing your identity and financial details.

When you think of internet auctions, one name dominates — eBay. One in seven adult Australians are eBay members and the site's used to sell everything from vinyl records, CDs and DVDs to cars and houses. Worldwide, eBay users sell more than \$1344 worth of goods on the site every second and there are about 50 million items available for sale at any given time.

On the surface eBay is as simple as burning a piece of toast and carving the shape of Rove McManus's head on it, taking a photo, filling out the forms that go with selling something on the megasite and then sitting back and, hopefully, watching the bids roll in. Of course, nothing in the world is ever that easy — particularly when it comes to making money — and eBay can be far more complicated than it appears on the surface. In fact it's so complicated books have been written about it. So let's start at the beginning.

WHAT IS EBAY?

eBay is a marketplace that lets you buy or sell in online auctions. And like all marketplaces it has its own set of rules and regulations that govern how you sell, what you can and can't do and what you have to do to be a seller or a buyer in the first place.

The company was founded 10 years ago and is now the biggest online auction house in the world, with more than 147 million registered users worldwide. Many countries have their own local eBay

marketplaces — Australia's site can be found at www.ebay.com.au.

Price structures and listing categories can vary from country to country. An item that's listed for auction will appear on every eBay site worldwide, but most people only search for items in their own country (the postage is cheaper, for one thing, and you can use your own currency).

As in a regular auction, you bid for items in increments. Unlike a regular auction, there's a set time period involved — up to 10 days in some cases. The top bid at the end of the time period wins the auction.

Some sellers will also let you buy items at a set price without having to go through the auction process — look for a 'Buy It Now' logo beside the listed item.

The most important thing to remember is that eBay just provides the facilities to run the auction. The transaction itself is between the buyer and seller.

Anyone can browse the site looking at items for sale, but you'll need to register with eBay if you want to sell or bid on anything. It's free to join but you must agree to the terms and conditions of eBay's user agreement, a lengthy document that outlines many of the rules and regulations for using the site. You should also read eBay's privacy policy carefully before you sign up. You'll need to choose a user ID and a password and include your email and postal address.

Once you're signed on the fun begins — eBay's been used to sell everything from Madonna's old tour costumes to more ephemeral items such as the aforementioned piece of toast featuring Rove McManus's head. The most expensive item sold on eBay in Australia was the chance to drive in the celebrity race at the Formula 1 Grand Prix earlier this year — it sold for \$100,000 — but most items for sale are far more prosaic.

BUYING

Half the fun of a real-life auction lies in the bidding process. Bidding online has its own share of excitement but it also has its share of pitfalls. One of the most important things to remember is that, like conventionally auctioned goods, anything bought in Australia from an auction isn't covered by consumer statutory warranty rights. Sellers must provide a true representation of the item for sale, but if it stops working the day after you receive it, you'll have to wear the cost.

Checking a few things first can save you a lot of heartache in the long run:

- Do your homework. Just because it's listed on eBay doesn't mean it's a bargain. Before you decide on your highest bid, check how much the item retails for on the internet or in shops. An easy way to do this is to type the name of the item into a search engine such as Google, along with words such as price or RRP (recommended retail price).
- Read the description carefully to make sure it's what you're after. Most listings also include photos of the item.
- The terms and conditions of each sale are listed under postage, payment details and return policy. This is where you'll find information on how much it will cost to post your item and what happens if something goes wrong — say your item gets lost in the post. However, some sellers don't include a refund policy. If in doubt, email the seller and ask.
- Check the postage price as it can vary greatly. Sellers can set their own postage costs and may include costs for materials and time as well as postage fees. If you don't like the price, don't bid.
- Check that the available payment methods suit you.
- Each seller has a feedback rating made up of comments and ratings from other eBay members who've bought from them. A high feedback score can be a good sign of a reputable dealer, but take the number of transactions into account as well. Check the seller's profile and read some of the comments to get a better idea of their reputation. Trust your instincts — if you're at all worried, don't continue with the transaction.



■ If you're unsure about any aspect of the auction, ask the seller. A seller who won't answer your question may be an indication that something's not quite right.

■ Some sellers list items in US dollars or British pounds, even on the Australian eBay site. Double-check the currency. Many websites, such as www.xe.com, provide daily exchange rates.

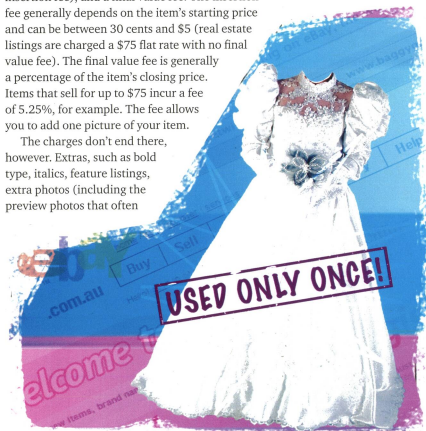
■ Some items, including shares, firearms and fireworks, are prohibited from listing on eBay. If you're unsure about an item, check the help section of the eBay website and report any suspicious items to eBay.

Most items will have a minimum starting price. If you're happy with the terms and conditions, enter the maximum amount you're willing to pay (your maximum bid) in the box at the bottom of the page and then click the Place Bid button. You'll get an email confirming your bid and the computer will do the rest. If you're outbid eBay will send you an email to let you know, and you can bid again if you want to. If you've won the auction you'll receive an email letting you know you've been successful and telling you what to do next.

SELLING

Bidding and buying are free but eBay charges sellers two separate fees — a fee to list the item (called an insertion fee), and a final value fee. The insertion fee generally depends on the item's starting price and can be between 30 cents and \$5 (real estate listings are charged a \$75 flat rate with no final value fee). The final value fee is generally a percentage of the item's closing price. Items that sell for up to \$75 incur a fee of 5.25%, for example. The fee allows you to add one picture of your item.

The charges don't end there, however. Extras, such as bold type, italics, feature listings, extra photos (including the preview photos that often



appear beside listings) incur extra costs. You'll also pay more if you wish to list in more than one category or want to schedule your items to go online at a later time.

All these fees are payable to eBay by credit or debit card, direct debit from your bank account, or by cheque or money order.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

The most common buyer-to-seller payment methods in Australia are via bank transfer or using a service called PayPal, which is owned by eBay. PayPal acts as an intermediary so that you don't have to give your credit card details to strangers over the internet, and charges you a fee each time you make a transaction. It's one of the safest ways to pay — eBay claims the loss rate due to fraud is 0.3%. There are more than one million Australian accounts at PayPal.com.au. It supports payments in US, Canadian and Australian dollars, euros, pounds sterling and yen.

You can also pay via money order, and some sellers accept cash. We don't recommend sending cash through the post, but cash-on-pick-up payments are a good option for items sold in the same city.

If you decide as seller to accept cash from overseas buyers, make sure you include a cash transaction fee as you'll be charged to convert the overseas currency into Australian dollars.

You may also see instant wire transfer systems like Western Union. Money transfer services are great for sending funds to people you know, but they're not really designed for doing business with strangers.

A seller who only takes this form of payment could be a sign that something's up. Wire transfers are also comparatively expensive and you'd probably want to avoid using them for this reason alone.

STAYING SAFE

Most eBay members abide by the rules and there's a distinct code of honour about trading.



However, the best thing about eBay — its size — is also the worst, in that it attracts scammers who try to steal your identity and use it for nefarious purposes.

The most common scam uses email purporting to be from eBay or PayPal to lure you into revealing your sign-on identity and credit card details. These messages can also carry viruses that can damage your computer or steal personal information, and also target organisations such as banks and internet service providers. The scams have become so sophisticated that eBay now communicates with its members via the My Messages folder, which you can find in the My eBay section of the site. You'll still get messages in your email inbox, so you can check those against My Messages to see if they're legitimate. If it's not also in My Messages, the best bet is to delete it. eBay offers an online tutorial at www.ebay.com.au/education/spoofutorial.

If you're buying an expensive item (say, more than \$400 or so), think about using an escrow service. This is a third-party service that holds the money for you (for a fee, of course) until you receive the item. It can be good insurance against shonky operators, but scammers have been known to set up phony escrow service sites, take the money and run.

It's probably best to only use escrow services recommended by the auction site. If a seller or bidder insists on using a specific escrow company, ask them why. If anything sounds suspicious, it's probably best not to deal with the seller.

If something goes wrong you may be able to access buyer protection programs, but there are often a few strings attached. For example, PayPal offers up to \$1500 protection on qualified eBay items, but the seller must have sold and received feedback on at least 50 items. If you buy from a first-time seller, or even somebody who's only sold a few things online, you won't be covered. The seller must also have 98% positive feedback and a verified Premier or Business PayPal account, so many items won't be covered.

eBay doesn't have a customer service phone number. If there's a problem, you'll have to communicate via email.

GOING, GOING, GONE

eBay is certainly the biggest online auction site in Australia, but there are alternative auction sites out there. Many sites don't let you sell goods yourself or may only focus on one type of product. They're not as big as eBay, so product choice might not be as extensive, but some offer free listings or no sales fees. The same security concerns apply, however. When dealing with an online auction, being cautious can lead to the best bargains.





Action-packed?

Energy drinks are trendy and give you a buzz — but they're not for kids.

They're fizzy drinks with a difference. **RED BULL** "vitalizes body and mind", **V** "invigorates you, replenishes energy levels, improves mental alertness and enhances concentration", **BLUE OX** "increases strength and stamina" and **NAUGHTY BOY** will "energise your body" and "enliven your mind".

What most of them in fact do is give you a caffeine fix with plenty of sugar.

AWESOME!

Most energy drinks come in a trendy can. Their funky brand names exude youth-appeal: **RED BULL**, **DARE**, **NAUGHTY BOY**, **WILD NRG**... And while these drinks may be aimed primarily at young adults, they also appeal to children.

Even five years ago, when sales of energy drinks were less than 20% of what they are now, an Australian survey found that 27% of boys aged 8–12 had consumed high-caffeine energy drinks in the previous two weeks. And some teenagers said they were having up to five cans of energy drink before sporting events.

As a parent, you probably wouldn't normally want your children to drink strong coffee or tea because there are concerns that caffeine isn't good for kids. These drinks have similar or even higher caffeine levels, so five of them is a lot of caffeine.

CAFFEINE CONCERNS

Caffeine's OK for adults in moderate amounts: four or five average-strength cups of coffee or their equivalent a day won't harm most people. But it's a powerful stimulant and has measurable effects even at very low 'doses'. Even half a cup of tea can be enough to increase your energy, alertness, motivation level and concentration.

The effects of caffeine differ from person to person, depending on age, body size and general health. Most adults can safely take in about 300 mg of caffeine a day. Very high levels (that's 1000 mg a day — equivalent to 11–12 cups of strong coffee) can be harmful. Research has shown links between heavy use of caffeine and osteoporosis, high blood pressure, heartburn, ulcers, severe insomnia and infertility.

Young children, however, can suffer disturbed sleep patterns, bedwetting and anxiety from the caffeine in just one can of an energy drink. And pregnant women should be wary, as studies have shown that a miscarriage in the first three months is more likely in women who've had more than 100 mg of caffeine daily (about two cups of weak coffee).

It's perhaps no coincidence that caffeine has a dark side. It's a poison created by plants to protect themselves from being eaten. Most animals can't stand the bitter taste.

IN A NUTSHELL

- Energy drinks such as **RED BULL** and **V** have obvious appeal to kids but can contain as much caffeine as a cup of coffee. Even small amounts of caffeine can make kids anxious and disturb their sleep patterns.
- Many of these drinks are also loaded with sugar, which most of us can do without.
- Energy drinks aren't sports drinks. They generally won't keep up your hydration when you're active.

NOT CALLED 'BULL' FOR NOTHING ...

The taurine in many energy drinks gets its name from the fact that it was first extracted from ox bile (*taurus* is Latin for 'bull'). It's now made synthetically, but the rumour has spread (presumably by word association) that taurine comes from bulls' testicles. This is of course not the case, but it's a great promo for energy drinks.

WHAT'S IN ENERGY DRINKS?

■ Caffeine

Most of these drinks have about the same amount of caffeine as a cup of strong instant coffee (see the table, right, for details). It's added as brewed coffee, guarana (another caffeine-containing plant product) or as the straight chemical (which is obtained commercially as a by-product of the manufacture of decaffeinated coffee).

Energy drinks (or 'formulated caffeinated beverages', as they're called in the Food Standards Code) display a warning on the label indicating that they're not recommended for children, pregnant or lactating women, or people sensitive to caffeine. But there are caffeine-containing drinks that don't carry it because they're not strictly 'formulated caffeinated beverages': for example, K-FEE *Turbodrink* is just coffee, while COCA-COLA and PEPSI contain caffeine, but not enough to qualify.

In the table we've listed the drinks by their caffeine content. K-FEE *Turbodrink* has the most with 130 mg — more than you'd get from a cup of strong coffee. But even COKE and PEPSI have 49 and 39 mg of caffeine per can respectively — about the same as a cup of weak instant coffee.

■ Sugar

Most energy drinks contain sugar, either as ordinary table sugar (sucrose) or glucose. Sugar

is rapidly digested and absorbed into the body, so the kilojoules of energy it provides are quickly made available for physical exertion. However, most of us not exerting ourselves physically would be better off without these additional kilojoules. You wouldn't stir about 12 teaspoons of sugar into your tea or coffee, but that's what's in a can of RED EYE Classic.

Two of the drinks have no sugar: RED BULL Sugar Free and V Sugarfree Invigorator Guarana Energy — they have artificial sweeteners instead.

LUCOZADE Sparkling Glucose Drink is a more traditional energy drink that's based only on sugar (it contains no caffeine). The label says it's "specially formulated with glucose syrup to provide glucose, the body's preferred source of fast, effective energy". We included it for comparison because it's been around for a long time.

■ Taurine

Most of these drinks have taurine as a key ingredient. We checked out the science and asked the manufacturers about its inclusion, but we've yet to see any convincing evidence that it'll give you a buzz (see *Not called 'bull' for nothing ...*, left). Taurine's used by the body in a wide range of protective and metabolic activities, but exactly what it does (and how it does it) is still largely unknown. Whatever its merits, though, you don't need to buy it in a can because there's plenty in the usual Australian diet and your body can easily make enough of its own — unless, perhaps, you're an elite athlete.

There's only limited evidence that taurine is safe at the very high levels found in some of these drinks. Under the Food Standards Code it's allowed in energy drinks at levels that'll give you a maximum intake of up to 2000 mg per day, as long as you don't exceed the recommended number of cans in a day. It's also allowed in sports foods, but curiously only to levels that'll give you no more than 60 mg per day. With so little known about it, we think it's crazy to allow such high levels of taurine in drinks that are often consumed by kids.

NAUGHTY GIRL contains carnitine rather than taurine. According to NAUGHTY GIRL it "assists fat burning". But like most such claims it's probably too good to be true — we looked for evidence and remain unconvinced.

■ B vitamins

B vitamins are used by the body in various ways that involve the release of energy from food. There's no obvious justification for including them in these drinks because a well-balanced diet already provides an adequate intake, and more of a good thing isn't necessarily better.



1 INGREDIENTS PER BOTTLE / CAN

Brand (from highest to lowest caffeine content)	Caffeine (mg)	Energy (kJ)	Sugars (g)	Taurine (mg)	Added B vitamins	Bottle / can size (mL)	Price per bottle/can (\$)*
K-FEE Turbodrunk (A)	130	343	13	0		250	2.30
WILD NRG	120	713	42	1333	✓	375	1.70
RED EYE Energy Drink with Attitude Classic	106	868	49	100	✓	330	2.10
RED EYE Energy Drink with Attitude Platinum	106	634	36	60	✓	330	2.10
Strong instant coffee (1 heaped tsp), no milk or sugar	90	<20	0	0		250	na
B-52	80	479	28	1000	✓	250	2.95
Cappuccino, no added sugar	80	260	5 (B)	0		250	na
NAUGHTY BOY	80	476	28	0		250	2.50
NAUGHTY GIRL	80	200	13	0		250	2.50
RED BULL	80	480	27	1000	✓	250	2.65
RED BULL Sugar Free	80	34	0	1000	✓	250	2.65
Short black coffee, no sugar	80	<20	0	0		100	na
BLUE OX Black Cherry	78	375	26	400	✓	250	1.95
BLUE OX Orange Rush	78	450	26	400	✓	250	1.95
BLUE OX Original	78	458	27	400	✓	250	1.95
V Invigorator Guarana Energy	78	475	28	500	✓	250	2.25
V Sugarfree Invigorator Guarana Energy	78	4	0	500	✓	250	2.25
Strong tea (teabag), no milk or sugar	70	<20	0	0		250	na
RECHARGE by Sprite	66	528	30	0	✓	300	2.10
DARE Coffee Shot with Guarana	64	466	17	0		200	1.60
SOLIS Adrenalin	63	683	39	0	✓	350	2.70
COCA-COLA (A)	49	675	40	0		375	1.25
Weak instant coffee (1 level tsp), no milk or sugar	45	<20	0	0		250	na
PEPSI (A)	39	737	41	0		375	1.25
Weak tea (teabag), no milk or sugar	20	<20	0	0		250	na
LUCOZADE Sparkling Glucose Drink Original Energy (A)	0	924	26	0		300	1.60

* Based on what we paid in June/July 2005.

na Not applicable.

(A) While these aren't marketed as energy drinks, we've included them for comparison. A 375 mL can of Diet Coke has a similar amount of caffeine to Coca-Cola, and 375 mL cans of Pepsi Max and Diet Pepsi have similar amounts of caffeine to Pepsi.

(B) Mainly lactose from the milk.

1 Ingredients per bottle or can

These are the amounts given in the nutrition information panel on the label.

Sports performance

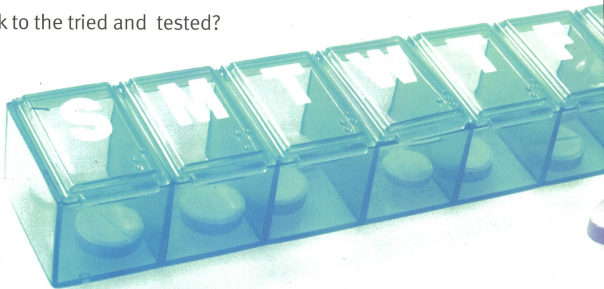
There's good evidence that caffeine enhances sports performance for elite athletes, though not for the average athlete. And energy drinks shouldn't be confused with sports drinks, which are designed to maximise hydration.

Sports drinks such as **POWERADE** and **STAMINADE** typically have about 12 g of sugar per serve, but most energy drinks have more than this (see the table, above). A high sugar concentration can slow absorption of water into the body, making these drinks unsuitable for rehydration during prolonged and vigorous physical exercise.



... in with the new?

Can we really trust new drugs to be safe and effective, or is it better to stick to the tried and tested?



IN A NUTSHELL

- **New doesn't always mean better** — It takes repeated drug trials and post-marketing surveillance to really understand how a drug works.
- **It's been known** for pharmaceutical companies to suppress results of negative trials or give biased reports of trials of new drugs.
- **If you're worried** or want to know more about your medication, ask your doctor why they're prescribing a drug and whether alternatives exist.

In 2004, **VIOXX** (rofecoxib), an anti-inflammatory drug used worldwide by millions of people (particularly arthritis sufferers), was voluntarily pulled from the market after a study demonstrated it increased the risk of heart attack. Rofecoxib belongs to the class of newer non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) known as Cox-2 inhibitors. They'd been developed to avoid the usual gastrointestinal side effects that older NSAIDs have. According to the drug companies, **VIOXX** and another new Cox-2 inhibitor, **CELEBREX** (celecoxib), reduced pain and inflammation while being easier on the stomach.

After the withdrawal was announced, Merck, the maker of **VIOXX**, said in a press release: "...we conclude that a voluntary withdrawal is the responsible course to take."

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, however, 2004 wasn't the first time Merck was aware of data linking **VIOXX** to heart problems. The newspaper reported that as far back as 1997, internal emails within the company showed it was aware of **VIOXX**'s potential to increase the risk of "thrombotic events". Merck says these comments have been taken "out of context".

More evidence that **VIOXX** could cause cardiovascular harm came from a trial the drug company itself reported on in 2000. Known as

VIGOR, the study was undertaken to prove **VIOXX** was better for the stomach than older, cheaper NSAIDs. Although this was confirmed, the trial also showed an increase in heart attacks for **VIOXX** users compared with naproxen (an older NSAID, sold as **NAPROSYN** and **ALEVE**).

Merck responded by presenting the (unproven) hypothesis that naproxen was perhaps cardio-protective — that is, **VIOXX** doesn't cause heart attacks, but naproxen prevents them.

WHAT THE FDA KNEW

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was also aware of **VIOXX**'s dangerous potential as far back as 2001. The regulatory body sent a warning letter to Merck, criticising it for minimising safety problems, for presenting the naproxen cardio-protective hypothesis as fact and for recommending **VIOXX** for unapproved uses. However, the FDA was extremely slow to take further action, and was publicly criticised by one of its scientists for its handling of the **VIOXX** case.

The FDA's Australian equivalent, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), introduced stronger restrictions on all Cox-2 inhibitors in February 2005. Merck is facing lawsuits in the US, and controversy around NSAIDs, especially Cox-2 inhibitors, continues.

As for **CELEBREX**, it's now claimed it isn't any better for the stomach than the older NSAIDs.



An article in the *British Medical Journal* claimed the study that concluded **CELEBREX** had a good gastrointestinal profile was misleading, as it only looked at short-term data, which was subsequently disproved by longer studies.

Finally, an observational study now suggests that many of the older NSAIDs aren't as safe as once believed — they too may increase the risk of heart attack.

Some in the medical profession find this unsurprising, considering the pharmacology of the drugs and how they work in the body. What does concern them is that pharmaceutical companies (often known as 'pharmas') can misrepresent results of trials in order to sell drugs. For potential prescribers and consumers it's disturbing to think evidence can be omitted from a report.

Experts also say the idea of 'needing' to use NSAIDs is a market-driven notion in the first place, as they're basically just painkillers and don't prevent or cure disease (see *Possible alternatives to NSAIDs*, above right).

THE HARD SELL

Marketing was a major contributor to ensuring **VIOXX** became so popular. Merck spent over US\$100 million a year on direct-to-consumer advertising, promoting the drug in over 80 countries, despite mounting evidence that **VIOXX** could increase the risk of heart

Possible alternatives to NSAIDS

Here's what our experts recommend if you have joint pain, such as that connected with arthritis:

- There's some evidence to show that glucosamine is pain-relieving, joint-protective and safe (see **CHOICE**, August 2005). Fish oil seems to be effective as well but in high doses.
- Paracetamol is effective but needs to be used regularly and with your doctor's knowledge.
- Other courses of action, such as weight reduction, physiotherapy and the use of orthotics, have evidence showing their value as treatments.
- Applying heat is sometimes useful. And sometimes distraction can relieve pain, as can understanding what's causing your pain.
- NSAIDs are best used only if other treatments aren't relieving the pain. If you have a heart problem or other medical condition that puts your health at risk if you use NSAIDs, discuss alternative treatments with your doctor.

TRIED AND TRUE

Bernadette Sweeney has osteoarthritis affecting her spine, causing her enormous pain. She's been using **NAPROSYN** (naproxen) for 20–30 years.

Although she's tried many NSAIDs, **NAPROSYN** is the only one she's taken that's controlled her pain. "It also masks the pain of RSI that I've got, and nothing else does that. I've tried natural remedies including glucosamine, but I can't say I benefited from them."

About two years ago, her doctor tried her on **VIOXX**, then **CELEBREX**, hoping it'd be easier on her stomach, as she experiences gastric reflux and has a hiatus hernia. When put on **VIOXX**, she wasn't informed about any dangers of the drug, although she went on it a couple of years before it was withdrawn from the market.

Bernadette took **VIOXX** for about three months, but it didn't help relieve her pain, so she went off it. Although a couple of colonoscopies have revealed a small amount of internal bleeding, she doesn't intend to stop using **NAPROSYN**. "It's the only anti-inflammatory that seems to help me."



CLIVE ROSS



GENE ROSS

Children and depression

If you think your child (or you, come to that) may be suffering from depression, it's important to seek help and discuss all available treatments with your doctor, as depression is a serious condition.

Some questions you can ask about the treatment you're offered include:

- Why have you chosen this treatment?
- What are the most important signs and symptoms that this diagnosis is based on?
- Are there any other medical problems that may be contributing?
- Could my child be worried about something, and is there anything we could do about that?
- How will we know if the child is better or worse (what measure is used)?
- What is the goal here? Make sure everyone knows what they want the outcome of the treatment to be.
- If drugs are prescribed, ask:
 - Is there another option?
 - Please explain the side effects and any withdrawal effects.
 - Could there be a danger of suicide?
 - Will these drugs interact with other medication?

This information was provided by the Department of Psychological Medicine, Women & Children's Hospital, Adelaide, and Beyondblue: the national depression initiative.

attacks and strokes. It's also been suggested that Merck instructed sales reps to avoid discussion with practitioners about cardiovascular events and VIOXX. Marketing certainly paid off — by 2003, Merck was making annual worldwide sales to the tune of \$2.5 billion.

The fact that large pharmas fund the marketing of new drugs and doctor education about them adds to the difficulty of knowing how reliable the whole testing and prescribing process is.

Many experts think it would be better if drug trials were independent of pharmaceutical companies. They find the practice of not disclosing information from trial results — because of 'trade secrets' — to be out of line with what should be the main priority of drug companies: improving health.

Doctors acknowledge that it's difficult to fully understand how safe a drug is when it's first introduced, as the drug's potential risks and benefits only become apparent over time — usually well after the drug is on the market. Most authorities in the field seem to agree that a combination of randomised controlled trials and post-marketing surveillance is needed to really understand how a drug works, but many experts believe this isn't being done properly yet.

If you were caught by the VIOXX withdrawal or have become dubious about taking **CELEBREX** or other NSAIDs, see *Possible alternatives to NSAIDs*, page 19, for help.

THE ANTIDEPRESSANT DEBATE

In another example of drugs being prescribed without full knowledge of their effects, in October 2004 the FDA told manufacturers of all antidepressants to put a 'black box' warning — its most serious safety alert — on the packaging to highlight the increased risk of suicide-related behaviour observed in children and adolescents using them. This included the newer antidepressants known as SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors).

Introduced in the 1990s primarily as a treatment for depression, SSRIs were welcomed by many psychiatrists because of their seemingly low side effects compared to the older antidepressants known as tricyclics and MAOIs. In particular, many doctors were worried about giving severely depressed people tricyclics, as it's possible to overdose on them. It turns out SSRIs do have side effects — just different ones from the old drugs.

SSRIs were originally formulated to treat major depression disorder in adults. However, children and adolescents have also been treated with these newer antidepressants, despite the fact that limited trials have been conducted with these age groups.

In Australia, only two SSRIs — fluvoxamine (LUVOX) and sertraline (ZOLOFT) — have official approval for children and adolescents to use, and only for the treatment of obsessive compulsive disorder. This doesn't mean, however, that they're not prescribed for other reasons, or that other SSRIs aren't prescribed. Prescribing a drug for 'off label use', as it's called, isn't uncommon or illegitimate, according to experts. A doctor may base their decision to do so on evidence from other studies, colleagues' recommendations and so on. Of SSRIs prescribed to young people in Australia between 2003 and 2004, approximately 4% were given to children under 10, with 76% given to adolescents in the 15–19 age group.

In 2004, however, a review of trials regarding the use of antidepressants for children concluded that evidence for the effectiveness of these drugs for children was poor and may have been biased in favour of their use. It was also found that SSRIs increased suicide-related behaviour (such as thinking about or attempting suicide) in 4% of young people in trials, compared to 2% on a placebo.

Although warnings have now been placed on packaging and documents released by the FDA and the TGA in Australia, it may not change much. Some psychiatrists think that while these warnings are correct, SSRIs will still be overprescribed, or prescribed when other lines of treatment should be used.

See *Children and depression*, far left, for some questions to ask medical practitioners about your child's treatment if they've been diagnosed with depression.

WHAT PATIENTS WANT

What these examples reveal is that patients and healthcare practitioners need transparent trials, based on principles that profit patients and healthcare rather than produce healthy profits.

Patients also want to feel confident they'll be prescribed the most appropriate, safe and effective lines of treatment, not the one most persistently marketed.

If your doctor suggests prescribing you a new drug (especially a long-term one such as a treatment for arthritis pain), ask them whether its benefits over older drugs are genuinely established, and how many independent trials or studies have proven it to have minimal side effects.

You might want to do a bit of your own research before taking it: while internet research has its pitfalls, if you stick to reputable sites you can easily find a lot of information that might help you decide whether to take it or stick to an old faithful.

ADDRESS THE CORE ISSUES

Now 25, Cathy was in therapy from age 13 until she was diagnosed with depression at 17. She was socially phobic to the point of being a recluse and also battled with other symptoms of depression, including a sense of worthlessness, irritability, insomnia, concentration difficulties and "... a general disinterest in everything. I was in a violent relationship by the time I was 17, and was also drinking heavily and taking drugs."

Once diagnosed, Cathy continued with therapy, but on its own it didn't work for her. Over a period of time in her teens she was prescribed the SSRI drugs ZOLOFT (sertraline) and PROZAC (fluoxetine), which made her feel "extreme nothingness". (See *The antidepressant debate*, page 20, for more on SSRIs.)

In 1999, she stopped drinking and taking drugs and was hospitalised four times for depression. She was also put on another SSRI (CIPRAMIL — citalopram), commenced long-term counselling including cognitive behavioural therapy, and also joined a support group to deal with her drug addiction and alcoholism.

This time, Cathy felt she got results from an SSRI. "Definitely the CIPRAMIL helped. I wasn't 100% better, but it settled the insomnia and I became less shy." She tried coming off the drug from 2000 to 2002, but all her old symptoms — weight gain, insomnia and depression — came back. "I couldn't maintain a job or uni even though I was clean and sober."

Returning to SSRIs relieved the symptoms of depression, but Cathy insists that medication is only one part of her program to sustain her mental, physical and emotional equilibrium. "I still go to a support group. I have an extensive support network and maintain regular exercise... I think medication needs to be used in a holistic way, and is only effective when addressing core issues at the same time."

Having done so, her life has completely turned around. "I function normally — I maintain a job, friendships, and am generally able to cope with things. I'm getting married soon — amazing considering my relationship history."



Of course you won't be able to find study results that have been suppressed or 'omitted', but if a new drug only has clinical trial results, for example, published by the pharmaceutical company that makes it rather than a peer-reviewed journal, you might consider giving it a little more time before committing yourself to taking it.

Rear window

How well can you see out of your car when reversing?

Following a number of fatal accidents caused by cars reversing in driveways, NRMA Insurance has developed a reversing visibility index that rates the blind spot area behind a car where the driver can't see a small child.

The assessment uses:

- A laser pointing device.
- A dummy representing an adult driver of average size.
- A test cylinder representing the shoulder height of an average two-year old.
- A grid measuring 1.8 x 15 metres at the rear of the car.

The laser is directed through the car's rear window, and the positions where the laser beam is visible on the test cylinder (and therefore the cylinder would be visible to the driver) are noted. An overall star rating is given based on:

- The shortest distance from the rear of the car at which the cylinder is visible across the width of the car.
- The total blind spot area.
- The effectiveness of a reversing aid (such as a sensor or camera), if the car is fitted with one. In general, reversing sensors improve a car's rating by half a star. A camera is likely to result in a very high star rating.

The lower the star rating, the less likely a driver is to see an object of child height when looking out of the rear window — Figure 1 (page 25) shows the difference between a car with half a star and one with four stars.

MAIN FINDINGS

- A high rear window line, rear head restraints and high-mounted spare tyre on some 4WDs can severely reduce the visibility out of the back of the car.
- However, contrary to popular belief, 4WDs don't all offer worse rear visibility than sedans. There are good and bad examples in each category, with models in five of the nine categories scoring zero stars.
- A reversing camera can eliminate reversing blind spots entirely — the LEXUS GS430 with such a camera is the only model that scored the maximum five stars. And an optional camera installed in the MITSUBISHI Pajero improved the car's rating from only half a star to 4.5 stars.



Notes to the table, right

1 Shortest distance to view test object

Shown in the table is the shortest distance from the back of the car at any one point at which the test cylinder is visible. The calculation of the star rating takes into account variations of the shortest distance at several points across the width of the car.

2 Test object invisible area

This is the grid area behind the car where the cylinder isn't visible (out of a total grid area of 27 m²).

Convertibles: If the visibility was different with the roof up and the roof down, only the better result was included in the table, and the roof position stated.

Sensors/cameras: Whether a model was tested with a reversing sensor or camera depended on which version NRMA Insurance was provided with for testing. For some models, only the result with sensor/camera is available. On some models, a sensor or camera is standard equipment.



Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories)	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m ² , out of 27m ²)	Star rating (out of 5)
SMALL			
DAIHATSU Charade (3-door hatch), 07/03 on	2.2	4.5	4
DAIHATSU Sirion GTVi (5-door hatch), 04/02–02/05	2.7	5.2	4
HOLDEN Barina (3-door hatch), 02/01 on	2.6	4.8	4
RENAULT Clio Sport (3-door hatch), 01/02 on	2.0	4.0	4
SUZUKI Ignis (3-door hatch), 10/00–02/05	2.8	5.0	4
CITROEN C2 (3-door hatch), 03/04 on	3.1	7.5	3.5
CITROEN C3 (5-door hatch), 12/02 on	3.1	7.1	3.5
DAEWOO Kalos (5-door hatch), 04/03–12/04	3.4	6.2	3.5
DAIHATSU YRV (5-door hatch), 07/02–01/05	3.2	6.8	3.5
HONDA Jazz (5-door hatch), 10/02 on	3.4	7.6	3.5
HYUNDAI Getz (3-door hatch), 09/02 on	3.2	7.0	3.5
MAZDA 121 Metro (5-door hatch), 10/96–12/02	2.5	5.5	3.5
MITSUBISHI Colt (5-door hatch), 09/04 on	3.3	6.7	3.5
PEUGEOT 206 (5-door hatch), 02/01 on	2.8	6.1	3.5
PEUGEOT 206 GTi (3-door hatch), 09/99 on	2.7	6.4	3.5
TOYOTA Echo (3-door hatch), 10/99 on	2.5	5.8	3.5
MAZDA 2 (5-door hatch), 12/02 on	4.2	8.3	3
KIA Rio (5-door hatch), 01/03 on	6.3	13.2	2.5
MERCEDES A160 (5-door hatch), 07/01–05/05	3.0	9.2	2.5
VW Polo (3-door hatch), 06/02 on	5.2	10.8	2.5
CITROEN C3 Pluriel (2-door convertible), 09/04 on	4.9	12.3	2
HOLDEN Barina (5-door hatch), 02/01 on	2.8	11.7	2
SUZUKI Swift (5-door hatch), 02/05 on	4.2	10.9	2
HYUNDAI Accent (3-door hatch), 09/03 on	9.1	22.3	1
VW Polo (sedan), 04/04 on	7.7	19.7	1
DAEWOO Kalos (sedan), 04/03–12/04	9.0	23.4	0.5
SMALL–MEDIUM			
FORD Focus CL (5-door hatch), 09/02 on	2.9	6.1	3.5
NISSAN Pulsar (5-door hatch), 06/01 on	4.2	8.0	3.5
RENAULT Mégane (5-door hatch), 12/03 on	3.4	7.8	3.5
SUBARU Impreza RS (sedan), 10/01 on	3.9	7.1	3.5
CITROEN C4 (5-door hatch), 04/05 on	4.6	8.6	3
FORD Focus ST170 (3-door hatch), 05/03 on	4.3	10.0	3
HOLDEN Astra (5-door hatch), 11/04 on	5.1	9.5	3
HONDA Civic (5-door hatch), 11/00 on	4.4	9.4	3
MAZDA 323 Astina (5-door hatch), 09/98–12/03	3.6	9.5	3
MAZDA 3 (5-door hatch), 01/04 on	4.5	9.0	3
MITSUBISHI Lancer (sedan), 07/02–09/03	4.9	10.4	3
PEUGEOT 307 Xsi (3-door hatch), 03/02 on	4.4	9.2	3
TOYOTA Corolla (5-door hatch), 12/01 on	4.5	9.5	3
TOYOTA Corolla (sedan), 12/01 on	4.9	10.3	3
TOYOTA Prius (sedan), 10/01–10/03	4.9	9.9	3
TOYOTA Prius II (5-door hatch), 11/03 on	4.1	8.2	3
HOLDEN Astra (5-door hatch), 09/98 on	6.8	13.2	2.5

Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories)	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m ² , out of 27m ²)	Star rating (out of 5)
BMW 316ti (2-door coupe), 10/01 on	9.5	17.4	2
KIA Optima (sedan), 04/04 on	4.5	11.2	2
MITSUBISHI Lancer (5-door wagon), 09/04 on	3.9	12.3	2
MITSUBISHI Lancer (sedan), 08/03 on	5.1	12.0	2
AUDI A3 (5-door hatch) with sensors, 02/05 on	8.6	19.5	1.5
BMW 120i (5-door hatch), 10/04 on	6.1	16.0	1.5
FORD Focus Ghia (sedan), 09/02 on	9.8	18.2	1.5
NISSAN Pulsar (sedan), 06/00 on	6.7	15.7	1.5
VW Golf (5-door hatch), 10/98–05/03	4.0	17.1	1.5
AUDI A3 (3-door hatch), 07/04 on	7.9	19.9	1
AUDI A3 (5-door hatch), no sensors, 02/05 on	8.6	19.5	1
DAEWOO Nubira (sedan), 10/99–05/03	5.2	19.5	1
HYUNDAI Elantra (5-door hatch), 10/03 on	8.8	20.2	1
KIA Cerato (5-door hatch), 05/05 on	7.6	18.4	1
VW Golf Sport (5-door hatch), 06/03–07/04	4.4	18.5	1
DAEWOO Lacetti (sedan), 08/03–12/04	8.1	22.9	0.5
KIA Cerato (sedan), 07/04 on	9.1	22.8	0.5
VW Golf (5-door hatch), 08/04 on	11.3	24.5	0.5
MEDIUM			
HOLDEN Vectra CDXi (sedan), 03/03 on	6.5	12.3	2.5
SUBARU Liberty 2.5i (5-door wagon), 09/03 on	5.5	11.4	2.5
ALFA ROMEO 156 JTS (sedan), 08/02–09/03	8.0	15.8	2
HOLDEN Vectra (sedan), 08/99–02/03	8.3	16.6	2
MAZDA 6 Sports Hatch (5-door hatch), 08/02 on	9.9	17.9	2
PEUGEOT 406 (sedan), 08/99–08/04	6.5	14.2	2
TOYOTA Camry (sedan), 08/97–09/02	7.7	15.4	2
SUBARU Liberty GX (sedan), 03/99–08/03	5.1	15.3	1.5
SUBARU Liberty RX (sedan), 03/99–08/03	5.2	16.7	1.5
TOYOTA Camry with spoiler (sedan), 09/02 on	11.1	20.3	1.5
TOYOTA Camry, no spoiler (sedan), 09/02 on	6.7	16.1	1.5
CHRYSLER PT Cruiser Street Cruiser (5-door hatch), 06/03–11/03	7.2	19.2	1
HONDA Accord Euro (sedan), 06/03 on	10.2	22.3	1
MAZDA 6 (5-door wagon), 08/02 on	10.0	19.6	1
MAZDA 6 (sedan), 09/02 on	10.3	21.5	1
PEUGEOT 407 (sedan) with sensors, 09/04 on	15.0	27.0	0.5
VW Bora (sedan), 06/01 on	10.4	24.6	0.5
LARGE			
FORD Falcon Fairmont Ghia (sedan) with sensors, 09/02 on	5.9	9.6	3
FORD Falcon (sedan), 09/02 on	6.4	12.9	2.5
FORD Falcon (wagon), 09/98–10/02	6.5	11.6	2.5
MITSUBISHI Magna (sedan), 06/03 on	7.1	13.4	2.5
TOYOTA Avalon, 10/03 on	6.6	14.1	2.5
FORD Falcon (sedan), 09/98–08/02	5.9	14.3	2
MITSUBISHI Magna (sedan), 08/00–05/03	9.7	17.5	2
NISSAN Maxima (sedan), 12/03 on	8.2	15.8	2

Continued overleaf

Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories), continued	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m², out of 27m²)	Star rating (out of 5)
HOLDEN Commodore (sedan), 09/02–09/03	11.5	21.2	1.5
HOLDEN Commodore (wagon), 09/97–09/02	13.2	25.1	0.5
HOLDEN Commodore Acclaim (sedan) with sensors, 08/04 on	15.5	27.0	0.5
HONDA Accord V6 (sedan), 08/03 on	10.3	24.2	0.5
HOLDEN Commodore (sedan), 09/97–09/02	16.8	27.0	0
4WDs			
LEXUS RX330 (5-door wagon) with camera, 04/03 on	0	0.1	4.5
MITSUBISHI Pajero Exceed (5-door wagon) with camera, 08/04 on	0	1.5	4.5
HOLDEN Cruze (5-door wagon), 06/02 on	3.4	7.8	3.5
KIA Sportage (5-door wagon), 10/00–06/04	2.8	6.1	3.5
MAZDA Tribute (5-door wagon), 02/01 on	4.6	10.8	3
MITSUBISHI Challenger (5-door wagon), 08/00 on	5.2	9.5	3
SUBARU Forester (5-door wagon), 07/02 on	3.6	8.2	3
TOYOTA Landcruiser 100 Series (5-door wagon), 10/01 on	5.6	10.6	3
VOVO V70 XC (5-door wagon), 09/00–07/01	4.3	9.7	3
DAIHATSU Terios (5-door wagon), 11/00 on	6.8	13.2	2.5
FORD Escape (5-door wagon), 01/04 on	5.6	12.2	2.5
HYUNDAI Santa Fe (5-door wagon), 11/00 on	6.5	12.7	2.5
HYUNDAI Terracan (5-door wagon), 11/01 on	7.4	13.9	2.5
HYUNDAI Tucson (5-door wagon), 08/04 on	4.7	11.0	2.5
KIA Sorento (5-door wagon), 02/03 on	7.4	14.4	2.5
LAND ROVER Discovery 3 (5-door wagon) with sensors, 04/05 on	3.7	11.3	2.5
NISSAN X-Trail (5-door wagon), 10/01 on	6.1	10.9	2.5
SUBARU Outback (5-door wagon), 09/03 on	6.0	12.5	2.5
SUBARU Outback H6 (5-door wagon), 10/98–08/03	6.3	12.7	2.5
TOYOTA Kluger (5-door wagon), 11/03 on	7.3	13.4	2.5
FORD Territory (5-door wagon) with sensors, 05/04 on	7.9	16.9	2
HONDA CR-V (5-door wagon), 09/97–11/01	5.3	14.2	2
LEXUS RX330 (5-door wagon), no camera, 04/03 on	9.3	17.4	2
MITSUBISHI Outlander (5-door wagon), 02/03–08/04	8.2	15.1	2
RANGE ROVER (5-door wagon), 08/02 on	5.0	14.0	2
TOYOTA Landcruiser 80 Series (5-door wagon), 01/93–02/98	7.9	15.1	2
FORD Territory (5-door wagon), no sensors, 05/04 on	7.9	16.9	1.5
HONDA MDX (5-door wagon), 04/03 on	8.0	17.0	1.5
KIA Sportage (5-door wagon), 05/05 on	5.7	16.2	1.5
LAND ROVER Defender (3-door wagon), 09/03 on	4.5	16.2	1.5
TOYOTA RAV4 (5-door wagon), 07/00–03/03	7.9	16.7	1.5
VOVO XC90 (5-door wagon), 07/03 on	10.7	20.9	1.5
AUDI Allroad (5-door wagon), 02/01 on	6.1	18.4	1

Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories)	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m², out of 27m²)	Star rating (out of 5)
BMW X5 3.0 L (5-door wagon), 11/00 on	10.2	19.9	1
NISSAN Patrol (5-door wagon), 10/04 on	6.4	20.1	1
PORSCHE Cayenne (5-door wagon), 06/03 on	10.1	23.2	1
TOYOTA RAV4 (3-door wagon), 07/00–03/03	5.5	18.8	1
VW Touareg (5-door wagon), 09/03 on	7.8	19.8	1
FORD Explorer (5-door wagon), 11/01–02/03	10.8	22.8	0.5
HOLDEN Adventra (5-door wagon), 10/03–10/04	14.4	26.4	0.5
HONDA CR-V (5-door wagon), 10/04 on	10.0	22.7	0.5
LAND ROVER Discovery (5-door wagon), 11/02 on	3.8	24.8	0.5
MITSUBISHI Pajero (5-door wagon), 05/00–10/02	11.1	25.4	0.5
MITSUBISHI Pajero (5-door wagon), 10/03 on	14.0	26.8	0.5
LAND ROVER Discovery (5-door wagon), 03/99–01/02	20.9	27.0	0
TOYOTA Prado (5-door wagon), 06/96–08/02	15.6	27.0	0
TOYOTA Prado (5-door wagon), 03/03 on	>22	27.0	0
PEOPLE MOVERS			
MITSUBISHI Grandis (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats stowed, 07/04 on	4.5	10.0	3
VW Caravelle (van), 01/91–09/97	7.2	13.6	2.5
DAEWOO Tacuma (5-door wagon), 11/00–12/04	4.6	12.5	2
HONDA Odyssey (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats stowed, 06/04 on	8.4	16.3	2
HYUNDAI Trajet (5-door wagon), 07/04 on	5.6	13.1	2
KIA Carnival (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats stowed, 10/03 on	6.1	14.2	2
MAZDA Premacy (5-door wagon), 02/01–06/03	4.6	17.1	1.5
VW Caravelle (van), 09/00 on	5.8	16.0	1.5
HONDA Odyssey (5-door wagon), 03/00–05/04	5.5	18.5	1
KIA Carnival (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats upright, 10/03 on	8.2	19.7	1
MITSUBISHI Grandis (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats upright, 07/04 on	7.2	22.2	1
TOYOTA Avenis (5-door wagon), 12/01–10/03	8.5	20.7	1
TOYOTA Tarago (van), 06/00 on	9.0	18.1	1
MAZDA MPV (5-door wagon), 06/02–12/03	13.7	26.4	0.5
HONDA Odyssey (5-door wagon), 3rd-row seats upright, 06/04 on	>15	27.0	0
LUXURY			
LEXUS GS430 (sedan) with sensors and camera, 03/05 on	0	0	5
JAGUAR XJ8 (sedan), 09/01–06/03	2.4	6.2	3.5
MERCEDES S430 (sedan) with sensors, 04/99–02/03	6.3	11.3	3
VOVO V50 (5-door wagon), 06/04 on	3.9	8.5	3
FORD Fairlane Ghia (sedan), 07/03 on	6.2	11.2	2.5
JAGUAR X-Type (sedan), 09/01–02/05	7.1	13.3	2.5
SAAB 93 2.0t (sedan) with sensors, 11/02–01/04	9.2	16.8	2.5
SAAB 95 (sedan), 10/02–01/04	7.9	14.1	2.5
VOVO S40 (sedan), 06/04 on	7.3	13.3	2.5

Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories)	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m ² , out of 27m ²)	Star rating (out of 5)
BMW 325Ci (2-door coupé), 06/03 on	8.6	15.9	2
BMW 318i (sedan), 03/03 on	7.4	17.2	1.5
JAGUAR S-Type R (sedan) with sensors, 07/02 on	7.7	18.8	1.5
MERCEDES C-Class (sedan), 08/01 on	10.6	19.0	1.5
VW Passat W8 (sedan) with sensors, 03/03–07/04	7.2	21.9	1.5
AUDI A4 Avant (5-door wagon), 09/02–04/05	8.9	20.0	1
AUDI A4 S4 (sedan) with sensors, 08/04 on	12.3	26.1	1
BMW 320i (5-door wagon), 03/03 on	4.9	18.1	1
VW Passat (sedan), 11/02 on	7.5	21.6	1
BMW 325ti (3-door coupé), 02/02 on	12.6	23.9	0.5
HOLDEN Statesman (sedan), 03/03–07/04	12.2	24.0	0.5
JAGUAR S-Type (sedan), 07/02 on	12.7	25.7	0.5
MERCEDES CLK500 (2-door convertible), 06/03 on	15.0	27.0	0
SPORTS			
MAZDA MX-5 (convertible), 10/00 on	0.8	2.2	4.5
ALFA ROMEO Spider JTS (2-door convertible, roof down), 10/03 on	2.7	5.1	4
AUDI TT Hardtop (2-door coupé), 05/99 on	2.7	5.0	4
BMW Z4 (convertible, roof up), 07/03 on	1.8	3.4	4
AUDI A4 S4 cabriolet (2-door convertible, roof down) with sensors, 02/05 on	5.1	9.6	3.5
AUDI TT Roadster (2-door convertible), 05/00 on	3.0	5.8	3.5
MERCEDES SL500 with sensors, 06/02 on	4.9	7.0	3.5
MG TF (2-door convertible), 08/02 on	2.9	6.0	3.5
CHRYSLER Crossfire (2-door coupé), 11/03 on	5.7	10.4	3
NISSAN 350Z (2-door coupé), 03/03 on	4.3	8.2	3
PORSCHE 911 Carrera (2-door coupé), 08/02–12/04	4.8	9.2	3
SUBARU Impreza WRX (sedan), 12/02 on	4.7	8.4	3
ALFA ROMEO GT (2-door convertible), 07/04 on	6.2	11.4	2.5
AUDI A4 cabriolet (2-door convertible), 06/03 on	6.4	13.2	2.5
MAZDA RX-8 (4-door coupé), 07/03 on	6.7	12.2	2.5
VW Beetle cabriolet (2-door convertible), 06/03 on	6.7	13.0	2.5
MINI COOPER cabrio (2-door convertible) with sensors, 01/05 on	4.8	15.7	2
SUBARU WRX Sti (sedan), 12/01 on	8.5	15.8	2
ALFA ROMEO 156 GTA (sedan), 08/02 on	7.5	15.5	1.5
FORD Falcon XR-8 (sedan), 09/02 on	6.5	15.3	1.5
HONDA Integra (4-door coupé), 02/03 on	10.6	19.6	1.5
SUBARU Liberty B4 (sedan), 08/01–08/03	5.8	17.9	1.5
HOLDEN Astra Convertible, 12/01 on	10.6	21.7	1
SUBARU Liberty GT (sedan), 09/03 on	9.4	20.5	1
HOLDEN Monaro CV8 (2-door coupé) with sensors, 09/04 on	18.3	27.0	0.5
VANS AND UTES			
KIA K2700 (cab chassis), 04/05 on	3.4	6.2	3.5
VW Transporter (van), 10/99–07/04	3.6	6.5	3.5

Brand / model / year (ranked according to star rating within categories)	1 Shortest distance to view test object (m)	2 Test object invisible area (m ² , out of 27m ²)	Star rating (out of 5)
KIA Pregio (van), 07/04 on	5.7	10.4	3
FORD Courier (crew cab ute), 08/04 on	6.0	10.8	2.5
FORD Courier (ute), 11/02 on	6.7	12.1	2.5
FORD Falcon XR-6 Turbo (ute), 10/02–09/04	7.7	13.9	2.5
HOLDEN Rodeo (4x2 crew cab), 12/95–02/03	6.5	11.6	2.5
HOLDEN Rodeo (4x2 dual cab), 03/03 on	6.5	12.1	2.5
HOLDEN Rodeo (4x2 space cab), 03/03 on	7.9	14.3	2.5
HOLDEN Rodeo (4x4 cab chassis), 03/03 on	6.9	12.4	2.5
MAZDA Bravo Freestyle (dual cab ute), 11/02 on	6.2	11.2	2.5
TOYOTA Hiace (van), 01/94–09/98	6.2	11.1	2.5
TOYOTA Hilux (4x2 cab chassis), 11/97–10/01	7.8	14.1	2.5
TOYOTA Hilux (4x2 Xtra cab), 03/05 on	7.2	13.0	2.5
TOYOTA Hilux SR5 (ute), 11/02–02/05	6.1	11.2	2.5
FORD Transit van, 05/01–04/04	4.1	12.4	2
HOLDEN Commodore Ute, 12/00–09/02	9.3	16.7	2
PROTON Jumbuck (ute), 02/03 on	8.4	15.2	2
HOLDEN Commodore SS Ute, 10/02–07/03	12.6	22.7	1
HOLDEN Commodore Ute, 03/95–12/00	10.5	20.8	1
HOLDEN Combo (van), 09/02 on	12.2	25.0	0.5
HOLDEN Crewman (4-door ute), 08/03–07/04	21.8	27.0	0

Source: NRMA Insurance

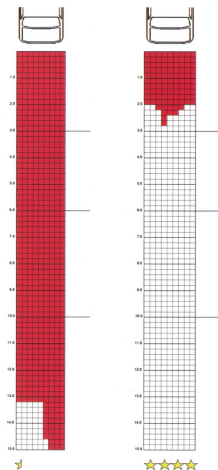
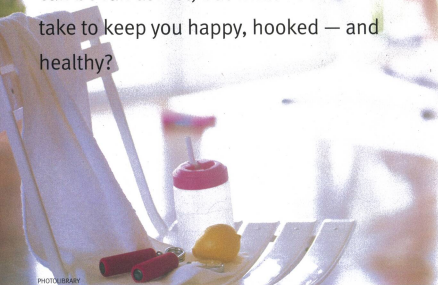


Figure 1.
The diagram shows the difference in rear visibility between a car with half a star rating (left) and one with four stars (right). In the red areas an average-height toddler could be invisible.

YOUR GYM AT HOME?

Home exercise equipment can be fun at first, but what does it take to keep you happy, hooked — and healthy?



IN A NUTSHELL

Home fitness machines can be a convenient way of integrating exercise into your life.

CHOICE subscribers told us noise, space and boredom were the main disincentives to continued use — things to consider when buying.

If you're not sure which machine — if any — is right for you, try hiring first.

Working out on fitness machines might look like good exercise, and you may even have confirmed this in the gym. But what if you buy one to use — often — at home? What makes some models better than others? Can a wise purchase choice make a difference to its enjoyability (OK, tolerability — this is exercise, after all!) and your persistence with it? Or will it inevitably become an expensive and ugly clothes rack?

We asked readers who own exercise bikes, treadmills and elliptical trainers about their experiences with equipment designed for domestic use, including what makes for a good or bad purchase decision. With your help plus information from our overseas counterparts who've tested this equipment, we've put together some tips on what to consider when buying home fitness equipment.

WHY BUY FITNESS EQUIPMENT?

Many readers pointed out you can exercise free — ride a bike, walk in the park, swim at the

beach — and saw little point in buying exercise equipment. Or you could go to a gym where there's more variety and better equipment, as well as company.

But this doesn't suit everyone, and people gave us many good reasons for using home exercise equipment. For example, parents with small children said they found it difficult to get out to do cardiovascular exercise, but could do it at home when the kids were in bed. Other reasons included finding it difficult to fit in a visit to the gym (or there was no gym nearby); being able to exercise in private; and living in a neighbourhood where it's unsafe to go out to exercise after dark, or where there are no proper footpaths.

Many just appreciated the convenience: getting straight out of bed, onto the treadmill and into the shower before breakfast; combining exercise with watching TV or reading time; and being able to exercise any time in any weather. Some used the machine to supplement other exercise (outdoors or in a gym), while others relied on it exclusively.

THE DOWNSIDE

The main complaints or reasons for giving up using exercise equipment were: boredom; loss of motivation; not being able to watch TV as planned, because the machine was too noisy (for the user and/or other household members); taking up too much space; and niggling faults with the machine, or breakdowns. Some were disappointed that home machines weren't as good as those you find at the gym.

In our survey, people who'd bought exercise equipment in the previous 12 months were typically using it three to four times a week. However, usage tended to drop off over the years, and by five years about half of our respondents who'd bought treadmills and three-quarters who'd bought exercise bikes were no longer using them.

Most people were satisfied with the machines they'd bought, especially those who'd bought treadmills (87% were satisfied, compared with 77% of people with exercise bikes or elliptical trainers). Not surprisingly, the more satisfied people were, the more likely they were to still be regularly using the machine.

OPTIONS

Treadmills are the most popular form of home exercise equipment these days, although exercise bikes, the perennial favourite, are still up there too. Elliptical trainers are the newish kid on the block, with sales rapidly increasing as people become more aware of their benefits.

Treadmills

A treadmill is a continuous moving belt, usually powered by a motor, on which you run or walk. You can adjust the intensity of the workout by altering the speed or the incline. Various surveys—including our own—have shown that compared with other equipment they're more likely to be used regularly and for a long time.

Advantages include that they're easy to use, versatile in that they can be used by people of varying levels of fitness, and can be combined with hand weights for an arm workout. Because you're doing weight-bearing exercise, it can help prevent osteoporosis.

Disadvantages are that they're relatively expensive, and lower-priced models may not be very well-constructed or suitable for running. Non-folding models take up a lot of space.

Reader comments

■ *"Good variety of programs, which makes it less boring. Easy to use and not hard on my joints. Convenient to have at home and I can exercise in any weather."*

■ *"Too noisy, takes up too much space, no automatic gradient [incline] control."*

What to look for

■ While horsepower isn't the be-all and end-all of treadmill performance, it's often recommended you look for one with at least 2.0 hp continuous-duty (not peak) power.

■ Get one with a belt width of at least 50 cm, especially if you plan to jog or run. As for length, the faster you run, the longer your stride. Make sure it's long enough to accommodate the stride of all users at their top speeds. There should be enough room on side panels for you to easily stand on them—and perhaps quickly jump onto it if you suddenly feel out of control.

■ A motorised or power incline is most convenient, as you can adjust the incline while exercising. Manual incline means you have to set it before you start, or stop, get off and adjust it mid-workout.

■ A 10% maximum incline is quite common, but for more serious hill work look for 12% or 15%. If you're very unfit, note that some cheaper models won't decline completely flat.

■ Speed adjustment—look for keypad controls, including up/down buttons, rather than a slide switch. Instant speed keys allow you to quickly change the speed to preset levels, and are useful if you want to chop and change speeds (interval training) or want a brief slowdown while you have a drink of water or take a phone call.

■ Check the maximum speed. For walkers and slow joggers a machine that goes up to 10 or 12 km/h may

suffice. More serious joggers and runners should get one up to 16 km/h, or even 20 km/h.

■ A safety key plugs into the console with the other end clipped to your clothing. The machine won't operate unless it's plugged in, so if you fall or can't keep up, the key pulls out of the console and the belt stops. If you have small children, you can hide the key so they can't start the machine.

■ Also see *Things to consider when buying*, page 28.

Elliptical (or cross) trainers

These are like a cross between a stair climber, ski machine, treadmill and a cycle (see the photo, below). You stand on large platform-like pedals and there are also moving handles that you can use to provide an upper-body workout. Because your weight is partly supported, the main advantages are a low-impact workout, so there's less stress on your joints, and that you get a good workout for less perceived exertion.

However, lower-priced models may not be well-constructed and have a jerky up-and-down motion rather than a loping run. It might take a while to get the hang of the action. And unless they fold somehow, they take up a lot of space.

Reader comments

■ *"I love the leg workout I get with the elliptical movement. It also gives my arms a good workout. I had to quit running after 13 years and this is a terrific substitute."*

■ *"It took up too much space to put it in an interesting place to use, and it was difficult to move around, especially through doorways."*



THE SURVEY

We asked CHOICE and CHOICE Online readers in May 2005 to complete an online survey about their experiences with home exercise equipment. We received 205 responses—thanks to all of you who took part.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

If you're not sure which — if any — home exercise equipment is right for you, you could try hiring first. In fact you might prefer not to buy at all — you could simply hire a series of different types of machine over time so you don't get bored.

There are plenty of hire companies out there, with prices ranging from around \$100 to \$200 per month for a treadmill, depending on the features and maximum speed. Bikes and elliptical trainers are more like \$80–\$120, with prices as low as \$50 for basic bikes.

If there's only one of you using it, that may be more expensive than the average gym membership, but you'll get a much better idea of what it's like exercising in your own home (the good and the bad). It gets cheaper if you hire for a longer term, and many companies will let you deduct some or all of the rental money you've paid if you decide to buy the machine.

What to look for

- Check the height of your ceilings — tall users may hit their heads.
- Fixed and moving handles. Make sure the moving handles don't hit you in the arms if you're holding the fixed ones.
- Wide pedals with safety rims on both sides.
- The stride length should be long enough for all users — some are too short for many people.
- The action and 'feel' can vary from model to model, so try out different ones before you buy.

Things to consider when buying

- Get a machine with a **good warranty**, if possible an extended warranty. Quite a few people in our survey experienced breakdowns or even minor niggles that reduced their enjoyment and usage of the machine. However, while many of the problems could be fixed under warranty, the waiting time and hassle involved were still inconvenient.
- There are subtle (and not-so-subtle) differences between models, so try any machine you're tempted to buy in the shop for around 10 minutes (wear suitable clothes and shoes when you shop). Test it out at different speeds to get a feel for the sturdiness of the machine; check for shakes and wobbles, creaks, rattles and overall noise; try out the controls and see how easy they are to operate (see more tips for specific types of machine under their *What to look for* heading.)

If more than one person will be using it, you should all try it — particularly for bikes and elliptical trainers, where stature can affect comfort and usability.

All this of course means don't buy an exercise bike on a whim when watching late-night TV. If you wake in the morning still thinking it's a good idea, get out and shop around.

- **Size matters.** A non-folding treadmill, a rower or an elliptical trainer can take up as much floor space as a sofa. A folding treadmill will save you some space, and if it's easily moved out of the way when folded, so much the better. On the other hand, if it's out of sight, will it also be out of mind, and sit unused in a cupboard?

- If you're likely to need to move it around, check it can be moved (wheels help) and can fit through doorways.
- If space is an issue, see if you can get one that folds or can at least be moved out of the way.
- Also see *Things to consider when buying*.

Exercise bikes

These provide a good cardiovascular workout as well as lower body conditioning. You can get the traditional upright type, or a recumbent cycle (you lie back in it) that's lower to the ground, with pedals out in front rather than straight down.

Exercise bikes are good for unfit or overweight people as they're weight-supporting. Recumbent cycles have a bucket seat with back rest, giving even more support and putting less strain on back and knees (and making it easier to read while you cycle). Some even have arm rests.

Exercise bikes can be quite dull, especially cheaper models with fewer bells and whistles to entertain you, and may become uncomfortable after a while. Recumbent bikes can take up a lot of space.

Reader comments

- *"My bike has a lovely smooth, quiet operation and I enjoy setting myself distance goals and achieving them."*

- **Feedback** such as speed, distance travelled, time, intensity/wattage, RPM and calories/kilojoules expended can be useful and provide incentive and motivation. Some record the information so you can monitor your progress over time, or you could use a notepad and pen.

Note that calorie counters are only a guide, because people of the same age, gender and weight can still have different metabolisms. Some don't even account for differences in workout intensity, so a slow, easy bike ride for 20 minutes appears to burn the same calories as a hard, fast 20-minute ride. When you're testing machines in-store, try altering the resistance and/or speed and see if the calorie-count changes too.

- **Heart rate monitors** help you gauge improvements in fitness and so help with motivation. Some machines can even automatically vary resistance or speed — and therefore your workout intensity — according to your heart rate. Chest-strap monitors are considered more accurate (and less fiddly) than thumb or handgrip monitors.
- Some machines have a **maximum weight limit** for users, so check this if you're overweight.
- **Think ahead.** Walking on a treadmill might be your limit now, but as you get fitter you might want to run. The maximum resistance on elliptical trainers and exercise bikes should be high enough to still give you a hard workout as you get fitter. This can be hard to judge at the start, when even the easiest level is a challenge. But rest assured, stick

I'm so motivated when I finish my ride, I usually throw in a few stomach crunches as well!"

I "The bike was great and I lost weight initially and firmed up my legs. But I stopped using it because my husband complained about the noise it made, and the seat was extremely uncomfortable after half an hour of pedalling."

What to look for

I Quite a few survey respondents complained the seat was uncomfortable, especially after 20 minutes or so. You could try replacing the seat, or buying a gel seat cover from a bike shop.

I If more than one household member is using it, check you can easily adjust the seat height (or the distance of the seat from the pedals for recumbent bikes).

I Magnetic resistance (to make cycling easier or harder) was considered quieter and smoother than air resistance or a tension band or belt.

I If necessary, check it's easily moved from place to place — look for wheels on the base, especially if it's a heavy model, and check it can fit through doorways.

I Straps on the pedals help keep your feet in place and assist on the 'up' pedal.

I Also see *Things to consider when buying*.



SECONDHAND

Plenty of people realise they've made a mistake buying exercise equipment: they're not getting much use out of it, or it's just too big for their home. The Trading Post, eBay and other secondhand markets are a good place to look.

If you look around at new models first to find out what features you want — and perhaps even which model — you may find exactly what you're after secondhand, for less cost. Check it out for faults, wobbles and rattles before you buy, though.

with it and you'll quickly improve. Take a fit friend shopping with you to test the upper limits, if necessary.

I When our overseas counterparts have tested treadmills, bikes, elliptical trainers and rowers, they've almost always found that **quality comes at a price**. Of course there are exceptions, with a few relative bargains among the top performers, and some expensive duds. But generally speaking, machines at the top end of the market are better built, sturdier (cheap models can feel flimsy and wobbly), have better durability and fewer faults, offer better features (and are less boring) and perform more like commercial gym equipment.

I Some features are useful, but some are gimmicky or turn out to be less useful than you might think. A **variety of programs** will help vary your workout and keep you interested. A **drink holder** is a good idea, a **caddy** for a TV remote or phone might be useful and a **rack for hand weights** might be appropriate. As for a **book rack**, some of our respondents thought they were great, others found it difficult to read and exercise at the same time.

An **inbuilt fan**, **TV and console backlighting** will add to the price, but perhaps not to the functionality. An **online support service** or '**club**' with downloadable programs, races against other users and rewards for milestones can help add and sustain interest.

I Learn how to **use it properly**. If you've never been taught how to use the equipment properly, you increase your risk of injury and may not



get the maximum benefit from exercising — and if you used exercise equipment in a good gym, you'd normally be taught how to use it correctly. If you're not confident, consider hiring a personal trainer to teach you how to use it, and also establish a program for you — a one-off expense that could prove worthwhile.

I Finally, think about your **motivation**. If you have a short-term goal, such as weight loss or 'getting fit', your needs will probably be different from someone with a longer-term goal, such as "I need to integrate more exercise into my overall lifestyle". Equipment for short-term goals could be cheaper and less sturdy, while for longer-term goals you'd benefit from a better-quality machine with a lower boredom factor.



Berri apple juice
1 cup (250 mL)
6.5 teaspoons of sugar



Yoplait Original yoghurt, strawberry
1 tub (200 g)
8.5 teaspoons of sugar



Arnott's Tim Tam
2 biscuits (35 g)
4 teaspoons of sugar

GENE ROSS/ACQUA PIV/NICHELLE HAVENSTEIN

Sweet enough?

Feeling worried about how much sugar you eat?
You need to get the balance right.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ Sugar isn't linked to diabetes, heart disease, cancer or hyperactivity.
■ However, it can play a role in tooth decay, and adds energy (kilojoules/calories) without any other nutrition. Heavy consumers of sugar, who may eat sugary foods instead of more nutritious ones, could end up missing out on some of the nutrients they need for a healthy diet.

Most people, if they're being honest, would admit to being a bit conflicted about sugar. On the one hand, it's an essential part of many foods we love — think of life without sweet things: cakes, biscuits, desserts, confectionery — and on the other, we all know these foods aren't the basis of a healthy diet. So how much sugar is OK to include in our diet and how many of the charges levelled against it really stack up? The good news is that despite what you may have heard, there's no evidence sugar causes diabetes, heart disease, cancer or kids to be hyperactive or have attention deficit disorder.

WHAT IS SUGAR?

Most Australians probably think of cane sugar (sucrose) when someone says 'sugar'. Our cupboards may contain white, brown, raw and caster sugar, but all are essentially sucrose. There are also other types of sugar in the foods we eat.

The main sugar in fruit is **fructose**; in milk, **lactose**; and other sugars in food include **glucose** and **maltose**. All have the same amount of kilojoules and energy.

All these types of sugar may be listed separately in the ingredient list of a food, but if you look at the nutrient panel the total amount of all of them will be given under 'sugars'.

Honey is a solution of sugars and it's nutritionally similar to other sugars.

TOOTH DECAY

Sugar is one of several things that can contribute to tooth decay (dental caries). And although sugar

(sucrose) is at the top of the list for its decay potential, it's by no means the only suspect. How you eat it and how well you care for your teeth are also important parts of the equation.

All sugars can be used as food by bacteria in the plaque on your teeth. The bacteria produce acids that can eat into tooth enamel, so all types of sugar can be a problem under the right conditions, as can starches and starchy foods. How much of a problem depends on how often you eat them through the day and how long they stay in your mouth.

Frequent snacking on sugary or starchy foods, and in particular ones that hang around in your mouth, like sticky, clingy biscuits, cakes and sweets, or foods you sip or suck for some time, can easily result in problems your dentist won't be happy about. Eating these foods as part of a meal is better than having them between meals.

Good oral hygiene is also a critical factor — regular teeth cleaning with a fluoride toothpaste, flossing and check-ups are essential to healthy teeth, no matter how much sugar you do or don't eat.

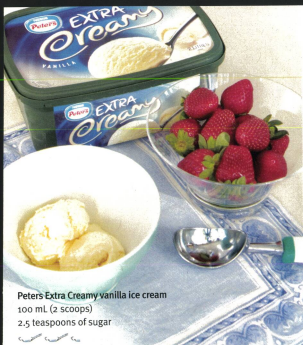
OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

The physiology of getting fat is pretty straightforward. Despite what fad diets might have you believe, if you eat more energy (kilojoules/calories) than you use, the extra is stored as fat and you'll become fatter over time. We all know this, we'd just like a simple eating 'trick' or easy 'diet' to make it otherwise.

And it doesn't matter where those extra kilojoules come from — fat, protein or carbohydrates (including sugar) — eat more than you need and you'll get fatter.

But a healthy diet isn't just eating the right amount

Teaspoons of sugar (4 g each, rounded to the nearest half) per serve. See *How much is 'moderate'?*, far right, for a guide to how many teaspoons a day are reasonable in a healthy diet.



Peters Extra Creamy vanilla ice cream
100 mL (2 scoops)
2.5 teaspoons of sugar

of energy for your needs, it's also about getting all the vitamins, minerals, fibre and phytochemicals you need to be healthy.

The one thing that refined sugar does is to add energy (kilojoules/calories) without adding any other nutrition. This can make it difficult for heavy consumers of sugar, who may eat sugary products instead of more nutritious foods and end up missing out on what they need for a healthy diet. Many sugary foods, such as pastries, biscuits, cakes, confectionery and soft drinks, are low in nutrition but high in kilojoules.

Of course, a little sugar can also make more nutritious foods more likely to be eaten: porridge with brown sugar or wholemeal toast with jam, for example.

That's why, on balance, we're advised to eat only a moderate amount of sugars and foods containing added sugars. But just how much sugar is that?

HOW MUCH IS 'MODERATE'?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the government's expert body that developed our Australian dietary guidelines, says there's no evidence that, for most people, getting up to 15–20% of energy from sugars is a problem in terms of having a healthy diet.

A joint World Health Organization (WHO)/Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expert committee proposed a maximum of 10% added sugars. However, this resulted in considerable scientific debate and hasn't been specifically included in WHO's recently released global strategy on diet, physical activity and health.

So how much does the NHMRC's 15–20% translate to? For an average man (aged between 30 and 60, weighing about 80 kg) it's 24 to 32 teaspoons a day; for an average woman (also between 30 and 60, but weighing about 65 kg), it's about 19 to 25 teaspoons a day. On average, Australians eat about the 20% level, but averages mask the high intakes of some people and the lower intakes of others.

In general, about 80% of the sugars we eat are already in the foods we buy, with soft drinks, juices, fruit-based drinks and sports drinks being major sources of sugars in our diets. Items like confectionery and cakes are significant sources too. And most of these foods are low in nutrition as well.

To see how some common foods contribute to our daily sugar total, we've printed the number of teaspoons of sugars in each — see the photos throughout this article. We chose top supermarket brands of popular foods for the examples. You can work out the number of teaspoons in other foods by dividing the grams of sugars given on the label by four (4 g is the amount of sugar in a level standard teaspoon).

You don't need to cut out sugar completely, just keep it to a sensible level. It makes sense to limit sugary foods that don't provide much in the way of nutritional value, such as cakes, pastries, biscuits, confectionery, soft drinks and other sugary drinks, and eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and wholegrain cereals instead.



Uncle Tobys Chewy
Muesli bars, apricot
1 bar (31.3 g)
1.5 teaspoons of sugar



Goulburn Valley Gold
peach slices in juice
1 serve (125 g)
3.5 teaspoons of sugar



Sanitarium So Good, chocolate flavour
1 cup (250 mL)
3.5 teaspoons of sugar

Ocean Spray
Cranberry Classic
fruit drink
1 cup (250 mL)
7.5 teaspoons of sugar



Nutella hazelnut spread
1 tablespoon (20 g)
3 teaspoons of sugar



Sara Lee strawberry cheesecake
1/4 cake (112 g)
5.5 teaspoons of sugar



SUGAR QUIZ

HOW'S YOUR SUGAR KNOWLEDGE? CHECK WITH OUR QUIZ.

1 If a food says it has 'no added sugar', it means:

- A No sugar or sugary ingredients were added in making it.
- B It doesn't contain any sugar.
- C It's not sweet.
- D It's low-energy.
- E Who knows?

E Who knows? Until recently there was a clear definition of 'no added sugar' in the Food Standards Code, but in the new version of the Code it's been removed. Now we have to rely on the Trade Practices Act, which says manufacturers aren't allowed to mislead consumers. Most manufacturers are probably still following the old definition, which is **A**, but it may be a case of 'buyer beware'. Hopefully new guidelines for manufacturers that are currently under discussion will clarify the situation.

2 There are more kilojoules in sugar than in other nutrients like fat or alcohol.

- A True.
- B False.

B False. Alcohol (29 kJ) and fat (37 kJ) have more kilojoules per gram than sugar, which is a carbohydrate and has 17 kJ per gram.

3 How many teaspoons of sugar are in a can of soft drink?

- A 5.
- B 10.
- C 15.
- D 20.

B 10. A can of COKE has around 40 grams of sugar — ten 4 g teaspoons.

4 Refined sugars are worse for you than sugars like raw sugar or honey?

- A True.
- B False.

B False. Sugar is sugar is sugar. Don't assume that because something sounds 'natural' it's better for you. All types of sugar have the same amount of kilojoules (although honey's about 20% water, so gram for gram it has fewer kilojoules). But none of these sweeteners is a significant source of minerals or vitamins.

5 Tinned peaches in syrup have more sugar than tinned peaches in juice.

- A True.
- B False.

A True. Peaches in juice have about 8% sugar compared to 12% for the peaches in syrup. That's a saving of about one teaspoon of sugar in a half-cup serve.

6 Most of the calories in beer come from sugar.

- A True.
- B False.

B False. Most of the calories in beer come from the alcohol. There's very little sugar in it — generally about 0.1%.

7 A serve of 'light' pie with 'light' ice cream must have less sugar than regular.

- A True.
- B False.

B False. If you check a 'light' product's label the fine print should tell you what the product is light in — it doesn't have to be light in everything. Light ice cream and desserts may

Nestlé Milo
25 g plus 1 cup milk (250 mL)
6 teaspoons of sugar



be light in fat and kilojoules, but not necessarily light in sugar.

For example, an individual serve of **NANNA'S** Lite apple pie with **PETERS** Light & Creamy ice cream has 9.5 teaspoons of sugar, compared to eight teaspoons for a serve of a **NANNA'S** regular apple pie and **PETERS** regular extra-creamy ice cream. Going for the light dessert does, however, save you over two teaspoons of fat and around 400 kJ.

8 Which of these drinks has the highest percentage of sugar?

- A Flavoured milk.
- B Sports drink.
- C Energy drink.
- D Soft drink.

D Soft drink, though energy drink is close behind. On average soft drinks are about 12% sugar, an average energy drink is around 11%, flavoured milk about 9% and a sports drink about 6%.

However, when you take into account the size of the bottle or can the picture changes — energy drinks generally come in a small 250 or 300 mL can (about 7 teaspoons of sugar), while a larger 375 mL can of average soft drink gives you about 11 teaspoons, and a 300 mL carton of flavoured milk 6.5. Sports drinks only seem to come in a large 600 mL bottle, so if you drink the lot, that smaller percentage translates into a heftier 9 teaspoons of sugar.

Only the milk really pulls its nutritional weight — it also delivers vitamins and minerals, most importantly calcium.

9 Strawberry 100% fruit spread has a lot less sugar than strawberry jam.

- A Always.
- B Never.
- C Sometimes.

C Sometimes. Some 100% fruit spreads have a lot less total sugar than the same brand of jam (almost half); some have similar levels. The sucrose that would have been used in the jam has been replaced by fruit sugars (fructose) in varying degrees. It pays to check the labels before you buy.

10 Kids' breakfast cereals average over two teaspoons of sugar per serve.

- A True.
- B False.

A True. When **CHOICE** last looked at cereals we found the eight highest in sugar were all targeted at kids. On average kids' cereals had a little over two teaspoons of sugar per serve, and it's not unusual for some to make it to three and sometimes almost four.

Kids' cereals do offer the benefits of added vitamins and minerals, but the majority are so processed they're fibre-flimsy, with less than one gram of fibre per serve. Kids don't need as much fibre as adults, but adding a teaspoon of sugar to a less processed cereal like **WEET-BIX** or **VITA BRITS** is a better option.

Syndrome X

It sounds like a pilot for a sci-fi series, but in fact it's a name coined to describe a cluster of abnormalities associated with insulin resistance, high blood pressure, obesity (centred around the stomach), low HDL-cholesterol (that's the good kind) and high blood triglycerides — all of which increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

A link has been suggested between syndrome X and large quantities of fructose — a type of sugar used much more extensively in processed foods in the US than here, but which also makes up one half of a molecule of ordinary sugar (sucrose).

The science is far from clear. There are animal studies that support the idea, but a very limited number of human studies.

Some experts say there's not enough fructose in Australian diets to have any noticeable effect, but it's early days and more research is needed. There's no suggestion that eating fruit (which provides fructose in association with dietary fibre) is a risk.



Kellogg's Nutri-Grain
1 cup (30 g)
plus 1/2 cup milk
4 teaspoons of sugar



Big M chocolate milk
1 cup (250 mL)
5.5 teaspoons of sugar

'ADDED SUGAR' LABELS

Currently food labels tell you the total amount of sugars in a product. We'd like to see consumers armed with more information: we'd like manufacturers to clearly show the amount of added sugars separately, so you know how much of the sugar comes from ingredients like dried fruit or milk that bring with them vitamins and minerals, and how much is simply refined sugars.

The great soft drink debate

Australians, like people in many countries around the world, are getting fatter. And among other things we're also increasingly drinking sugar-sweetened soft drinks. There's a growing concern that there could be a link between the two. The possible effect of excessive consumption of sugary drinks by children is especially of concern.

The debate started in 2001 with a US study that found the more soft drink kids in the study drank, the greater their chance was of becoming overweight.

Earlier this year a group of experts in New Zealand prepared a report that looked at the published evidence to date on sugary drinks and obesity in children. It concluded that there's evidence that sugary drinks play a role in promoting weight gain in kids.

And Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), our national food regulator, recently reported its view that the increased consumption of sweetened drinks, such as soft drinks, is now recognised as an important, independent risk factor for the development of obesity in school-aged children.

However, not everyone agrees the evidence overall supports a link. The Australian Food and Grocery Council says the evidence is equivocal — some studies suggest a link, others don't. It also considers it may be relevant that many studies have been conducted in the US, where drinks are sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, while Australia uses sucrose.

No doubt debate will continue at least until we have well-designed Australian studies looking at the situation here. In the meantime, it's certainly true that sugary soft drinks aren't essential to our diets and supply plenty of kilojoules while contributing little that's useful nutritionally.



Coca-Cola
1 can (375 mL)
10 teaspoons of sugar

Blood sugar ups and downs

Eating sugary foods used to be blamed for sending people's blood sugar levels soaring and then plunging — surges which some nutritionists think could have long-term effects on health.

But while some foods can send blood sugar levels bouncing, it seems the answer to which foods do this isn't as simple as just those with the most sugar.

The glycaemic index (GI) of foods is a way of measuring how they affect levels of sugar in the blood, giving each food a comparative score out of 100. It compares the effect of eating an amount of each food that contains 50 grams of carbohydrate with eating the same amount of pure glucose (GI = 100). Foods with a low GI (55 or less) make blood glucose levels rise and fall more gently, while high-GI foods (70 or more) are broken down more quickly and cause blood sugars to surge and crash. Perhaps surprisingly, table sugar scores a moderate 61.

For more on the glycaemic index and how it can affect your diet, see *Good carbs, bad carbs?*, CHOICE, April 2004, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on 'GI explained' under 'Food' in the index.



Fountain tomato sauce
1 tablespoon (20 mL)
1 teaspoon of sugar



Kit Kat
1 four-finger
block (45 g)
5.5 teaspoons
of sugar

LIVING COLOUR

On test: 28 colour printers including six laser models.

It can be difficult to choose from the multitude of inkjet printers out there. They all claim to offer various features, print speeds and quality, but how do they really compare? And then there's the question of laser printers. Although more expensive than inkjets, the price of colour laser printers has almost halved in the past two years and the print quality is improving.

Our sister publication, *Computer CHOICE*, tested 22 inkjet and six colour laser printers, comparing how well and how quickly they printed a range of different documents. The test assessed print quality, ease of use, versatility and other quality and environmental factors.

RUNNING COSTS

To determine how economical the printers were to run over time, *Computer CHOICE* printed the test pages over and over again on each printer until it refused to work or the output was impaired. Ink usage costs were calculated based on the amount of ink or toner used per page and the cost of the cartridges, based on recommended retail prices.

This is still the most significant aspect of printing costs and it's really where colour lasers come into their own. The top-scoring inkjet for running costs, the **EPSON Stylus Photo R800**, still scored just 51% for ink usage. In contrast, **EPSON's** laser printer, the **AcuLaser C1100**, scored 69%. Printing a desktop publishing colour page costs the same for the two printers, but the cost per page for black and white laser printing is half that of the inkjet. And printing a photo on the **AcuLaser C1100** costs just 43 cents, compared to \$1.57 using the **Stylus Photo R800**.

Another factor to consider when calculating your running costs is the printhead — the part that applies the ink to the paper. Some manufacturers, such as **HP**, incorporate the printhead in the ink cartridge. Others, such as **CANON**, have removable printheads that you can replace as they wear out. **EPSON** printheads are built into the printer itself and aren't easily replaced — you may need to take the printer to a repairer.

HANDY FEATURES

Printer technology now includes some pretty nifty features, such as the ability to print onto printable



DVDs and CDs; PictBridge technology, which allows a digital camera to control the printer in much the same way as a computer would; and paper duplexing, which lets you print on both sides of the paper.

If you'd like to subscribe to *Computer CHOICE*, call 1800 069 552 toll-free or go to www.choice.com.au/magazines.

WHAT TO BUY

Inkjet printers

CANON Pixma iP8500	\$599
CANON Pixma iP3000 BEST BUY	\$249
EPSON Stylus Photo R800	\$699
CANON Pixma iP6000D	\$379

Laser printers

EPSON AcuLaser C1100	\$799
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At \$249, the **CANON Pixma iP3000** is the **Best Buy**. It combines a low price with good performance and versatility, making it a good all-round choice. The **CANON Pixma iP8500** was the top scorer overall, but it's more expensive than the **Pixma iP3000** and was let down by its ink cost scores.

The **EPSON Stylus Photo R800** is hard to beat for print quality — it produced exceptionally good-quality photos. At \$699, it was the most expensive inkjet printer in the test but it was also the least expensive to run.

If you're after versatility, the **CANON Pixma iP6000D** scored full marks. It lets you print directly from digital still or video cameras, memory cards and even compatible mobile phones, and has a 2.5-inch (65 mm) colour LCD screen.

The **EPSON AcuLaser C1100** was the top colour laser printer on test. It's super-fast and economical to run.

A good night's sleep

Over-the-counter sleep aid products are only short-term solutions, but there are more lasting ways of improving your sleep.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ Antihistamines, valerian and other herbal preparations are the main over-the-counter remedies on offer. They may or may not work for you, some can have side effects and none is recommended for long-term insomnia.

■ Non-drug tips for dealing with insomnia — see page 39.

If you've lain awake for hours cursing the clock or watched infomercials at 3 am because you've woken up and can't get back to sleep, you're not alone. Estimates vary, but something like 10–40% of the population has trouble from time to time either getting to sleep or staying asleep. For up to 15% of people, sleep problems are a long-term difficulty.

Often brought about by a major life stressor like ill health, a new job or a relationship break-up, even a few nights' poor sleep can leave you feeling irritable, lethargic and with a sense that you're functioning below par. Over a period of time, insomnia can affect your work, health and relationships.

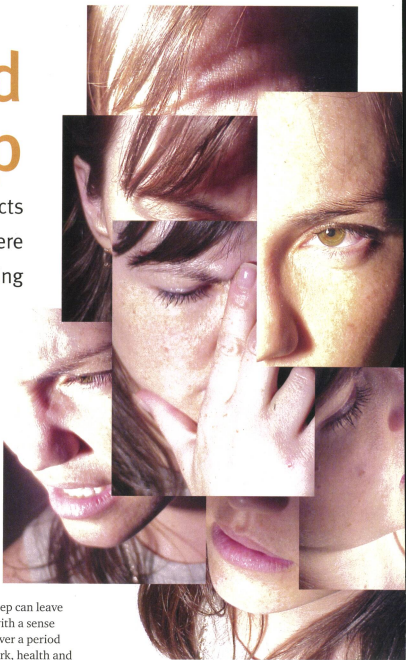
A constant inability to get off to sleep or stay asleep may well have got you pondering (usually at night when you'd rather be sleeping) about whether to get a little chemical or herbal assistance, perhaps in a product available from a pharmacy.

We asked the experts and had a look at the evidence available to find out how safe and effective these products are. We also sought advice and got some tips to help you get the sleep you may be craving. So rest assured — sleep problems can be treated.

But first, what exactly is insomnia and what causes it?

INSOMNIA

Insomnia can be transient — that is, just occurring for a couple of days — or short-term, lasting for a



couple of weeks. If it occurs at least three times a week for longer than one month, it's classified as chronic insomnia.

Sleep disturbance can be a secondary condition of an illness such as depression or cardiovascular disease, or as a result of physical pain, substance abuse or a side effect to certain medications. It can also be stress-related or due to poor sleeping habits (known as 'sleep hygiene'). Other sleep disorders, which need medical attention, include narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome (an overwhelming urge to move your legs) and sleep apnoea (see page 38).

Insomnia may manifest itself as a difficulty going off to sleep, constant waking throughout the night, or waking early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep. As we age, sleep problems can

increase. Older people commonly suffer from insomnia as a reaction to physical pain or as a side effect of medication or illness.

SETTING UP A CYCLE

We've all managed to drag ourselves through a day at work after a late night, but having persistent insomnia can be distressing. Experts can paint a picture of how it might come about.

Some people may have a vulnerability to insomnia in the first place. But usually there's an 'activating event' — a stressful situation like moving home or a sick child. Sleep problems start and then the sufferer starts to expect them and to see themselves as an insomniac. They may find evidence as to why they're not sleeping, put a lot of effort into trying to sleep and try to compensate by spending more time in bed. But then bed becomes a stressful, 'unsafe' place to be.

At this point many people rush to the chemist to get some help in a bottle or jar. Possibly fuelled by the fear of becoming addicted to prescribed drugs, many sufferers opt for something 'natural'.

We looked at two categories of over-the-counter sleep aid products available at chemists — complementary medicines and restricted Pharmacy Only medicine (which, for insomnia, is antihistamines).

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES

We shopped around to see what complementary medicine offered the sleep-deprived, returning with 15 different products. These consisted of preparations that contained solely valerian (five), valerian and magnesium (one) and preparations containing valerian and other herbs (six). Only three preparations didn't contain valerian.

Of all of the popular herbal sedatives, valerian has undergone the most clinical trials to try to establish its effectiveness and safety as a treatment for insomnia. It also has a very long tradition of use as a medicinal herb. Although some of the clinical trials showed possible benefits of valerian as a treatment for insomnia, results were contradictory and therefore inconclusive.

Preliminary findings suggest valerian may improve sleep for children with intellectual disabilities, who commonly suffer from sleeping difficulties, but again more research is needed.

VALERIAN VARIATIONS

According to the labels of our valerian preparations they contained between 86 and 2500 milligrams of valerian per tablet or capsule. Those that contained less than 1800 mg in each tablet recommended taking two or more at a time, usually 30 to 60 minutes before bed.

In clinical trials, doses of valerian root extract to treat insomnia ranged from 300 to 900 mg, administered half-an-hour to an hour before bed. But in the products we purchased, the recommended dose of valerian ranged from 258 to 4000 mg — a huge variation between brands.

Valerian is also described as "standardised" on many of the labels, but according to Australia's medicine regulatory body, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), there's no definition of the term "standardised" in the legislation.

Although valerian seems to be generally benign, there have been rare reports of liver damage. Stomach upset, headache and vivid dreams are some other rarely reported side effects. Valerian shouldn't be used during pregnancy or breastfeeding as its safety for such users hasn't been established — one of the active ingredients in valerian has been shown to be able to cause DNA changes in cells. While risk of cell damage is probably low, it may not be something you'd want to use regularly.

There's also evidence valerian might take a couple

Infants and sleep aids

It's common for children under two to have trouble getting or staying asleep (just look how tired their parents often are). While babies' and toddlers' sleep may be disturbed by illness or, like adults, changes such as moving house, it can also be a result of parents misreading their child's tiredness signals or a lack of a daily routine.

Karitane, a support, guidance and information service for parents in NSW, recommends parents learn settling techniques appropriate for their child's age group. A sleep routine, such as always giving a massage or a bath before bed, is also useful as it gives the baby signals that it's time for sleep.

All the over-the-counter medications we bought weren't recommended for children under two, with the exception of BRAUER Calm, which claims to be suitable for children from six months to 12 years. Karitane doesn't advocate over-the-counter medication or herbal remedies for sleep assistance with babies. If your child is having severe sleep difficulties, consult a doctor.

Karitane also stresses that parents need support so they have time out and someone to go to for advice about their baby's sleep issues:

■ For more information on Karitane's services or to read its guide to children's sleep signals, go to www.swsahs.nsw.gov.au/karitane.

■ Type 'insomnia' in the search box at www.choice.com.au and then click on 'More information' for more on community support for parenting in your state, and general information about babies, children, teenagers and sleep.



of weeks to become effective, by which time the insomnia might have disappeared anyway.

In conclusion, while it does seem that valerian has potential as a sleep aid, most experts agree that further trials need to be carried out to find out more about this herb and its effects.

HAPPY WITH HERBS?

The remaining complementary preparations we bought contained a variety of herbs including passionflower, hops and chamomile. These herbs, while traditionally used to treat anxiety and sleeplessness, have limited or no clinical trials to support their safety and efficacy as sleep aids.

Some of the products also contained vitamins and minerals such as calcium, magnesium, vitamin B₆ and vitamin K. We couldn't find any evidence to say the small amounts in these preparations would induce relaxation or sleep.

Most of the products claimed to relieve or help relieve insomnia and sleeplessness, although a product distributed by NUTRA-LIFE claimed to "help calm and reduce nervousness and aid relaxation, particularly in cases of sleep disorders".

We contacted the manufacturers to ask for supporting evidence. Out of 10 companies, we heard back from five: NUTRA-LIFE, BRAUER, BLACKMORES, CARLSON HEALTH and IPA (distributor of SOUL PATTINSON goods), but none added anything significant to the limited evidence we could find for the ingredients. However, all the complementary products are listed with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which means they contain well-established ingredients used for a long time and are considered by the TGA to be low-risk.

It's worth noting that even with low-risk medicines, there can be rare cases of adverse effects.



GENE ROSS

Sleep apnoea

Sleep apnoea, a condition where the sufferer stops breathing for at least 10 seconds, over and over again throughout the night, can be divided into two types. The most common type, obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA), is caused when the airway passage is obstructed during sleep, for instance by the tongue. In central sleep apnoea, a far less common condition, respiration at night is affected by a disorder in brain function; its symptoms and diagnosis are similar but treatment may involve more elements.

OSA can be brought about or hastened by factors such as obesity or weight gain, smoking, alcohol and sedative use. It may also be the result of a person's anatomy, such as enlarged tonsils.

If you suffer from sleep apnoea you'll wake many times during the night (in order to start breathing again), although you may not remember doing so. These constant sleep disruptions usually result in daytime sleepiness. While many sufferers also have a snoring problem that may help diagnosis, it's not always a symptom.

OSA is in fact often undiagnosed, leaving the sufferer tired, irritable and possibly vulnerable to health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes and coronary disease. Other problems, such as

falling asleep at the wheel, can also result from leaving OSA unchecked.

If you find it hard to stay awake during the day (especially in the afternoon), wake up feeling tired despite the amount of sleep you've had or fall asleep easily in the afternoon, have yourself assessed for OSA. This involves having a polysomnogram — a test measuring various physiological activities while you sleep — to determine if you have the condition.

A number of treatments are available for OSA. Sometimes weight loss, not sleeping on your back and avoiding alcohol and sedatives are enough to manage the condition. In more severe cases, dental appliances may be used to keep the airway open.

Nasal CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) is considered the most effective, non-invasive treatment for OSA. The CPAP machine has a nasal mask that blows air through the nose and holds the airway open, helping the sufferer breathe regularly through the night.

Surgery is also an option. For children with OSA this often involves taking out their tonsils and adenoids. Occasionally, adults may also undergo surgical procedures for the condition. Studies suggest medication is an ineffective treatment for OSA.

For instance, an Australian woman was hospitalised after a severe reaction to passionflower. There have also been reports of liver damage from use of preparations containing American skullcap, which we found in one preparation. While rare, these cases are a reminder to be careful when using herbal preparations. Always let your doctor know if you're taking any kind of over-the-counter complementary medicine. Herbal preparations, like other drugs, can modify chemical processes in the body and interact with other medications. As CHOICE has often noted, the problem with herbal remedies is that 'herbal' sounds safe, but they're not tested in the same way as other medications.

ANTIHISTAMINES

The other option for over-the-counter sleep aid products is antihistamines like promethazine and doxylamine.

While these may send some people off to sleep, they can have the opposite effect on others. Antihistamines can also have side effects, most notoriously drowsiness or a hangover effect the next day. They may affect your work or ability to drive a car.

Antihistamines can interact with other medications, including certain kinds of antidepressant and prescription hypnotics. People with certain medical conditions, such as asthma, glaucoma and epilepsy, shouldn't use them. Always tell your pharmacist about any medical condition you have or medication you're taking, including complementary preparations, before using Pharmacy Only medication.

If you decide to try them, they're only recommended for short-term use. As with all sleep aid products, if you don't improve see a doctor, as insomnia can be an indication of an underlying medical problem.

Antihistamines aren't recommended for use during pregnancy or breastfeeding. It's not known how safe they are for children under 12, and some children become hyperactive on them. Always get a copy of the relevant Consumer Medicine Information from your pharmacist and ask about anything you don't understand.

Some experts think that even though antihistamines may be acceptable during acute (short-term) insomnia, if medication is required it's preferable to have a doctor prescribe the appropriate drugs. Although it's easier to buy antihistamines over-the-counter, seeing a doctor is useful as they may be able to advise on other ways to combat insomnia. And prescribed medication for insomnia may be more effective, because, as one expert told us, "Antihistamines are worse than prescribed drugs because people's reactions to them are varied."

A CHRONIC SUFFERER

Sophia Russell (not her real name) hasn't had a week's worth of uninterrupted sleep for about three years. Although she'd previously experienced sleep problems on and off throughout her life, "It's never been a pattern like now. I'll fall asleep quickly, but after 2 am I'll wake up and fall asleep over and over again. When it's time to get up for work I'm dead to the world."

Sophia doesn't recall a particular stressor that triggered the insomnia, though she does admit to being a worrier.

She's only tried one over-the-counter remedy — an antihistamine the pharmacist gave her. "It made me groggy the next day," she said. "I didn't feel refreshed when I woke up. I tried it for three or four nights but because I felt so bad when I woke up I stopped taking it."

Sophia hasn't seen a doctor about her sleep problems, and hadn't heard about many of the recommended non-drug treatments for insomnia. She'd heard about not using the bed for anything but sleep, "But I watch TV in bed."

The hardest thing about the lack of sleep for Sophia is not lying awake at night, but the exhaustion she experiences the following day at work. "I get so tired in the afternoon. The urge to fall asleep is really strong and I have to get a cappuccino to get a lift."



EXPERT TIPS FOR GOOD SLEEP

- Make sure your room is comfortable — not too hot or cold, with a comfortable mattress on the bed, some fresh air and a minimum of noise (use a white noise machine, a fan or earplugs if noise is a problem).
- Establish that the bed is for sleep or sex only — don't work, read, argue or worry there.
- People who suffer from sleep disorders often have faulty perceptions about sleep. Experts point out that if you don't sleep you still get sleepy, but a lot of people don't use that fact to help themselves. If you get insomnia you tend to go to bed early and stay in bed late to give yourself the maximum possibility of sleeping. However, when you don't sleep this can create a negative association with going to bed. So don't get into bed until you're really sleepy.
- If you don't fall asleep after a period of about 15 minutes, get up and do something relaxing — have a bath, read a book (nothing too stimulating — no thrillers!), listen to soft music — then get back into bed when you're sleepy. Get up again if you still can't sleep. It might take a few goes, but you should eventually nod off.
- While a lot of people think having a few stiff drinks is a good recipe for getting off to sleep and staying there, experts say it's a no-no: alcohol disturbs sleep patterns.

MORE INFO ...

For more tips on overcoming insomnia, type 'Insomnia' in the search box at www.choice.com.au (it's a free article).



Swish swash ...

... washing all the dirty clothes.

IN A NUTSHELL

■ Test results for 41 washing machines, including 10 newly tested models.

■ You can probably get more into your front loader — how full is full? See Size matters, below right.

“I’m in a washing machine, I get all the clothes clean, I live in the laundry and wash all day...swish swash...” All too familiar with the lyrics? Then chances are you’ve got kids, do a fair bit of washing and probably need a big washer to cope. Big machines are many families’ preferred choice — most sales are of larger washers (6.5 kg plus).

Our latest test proves once again that front loaders are generally the most energy and water-efficient — water being the key issue in the midst of a drought. They’re also gentler on clothes. But large front loaders have been difficult to find until recently.

We’ve added four medium to large front loaders to our list of tested models: an **ARISTON** (7.5 kg), two **SAMSUNGS** (7 kg) and a **WESTINGHOUSE** (6.5 kg). Three made it into our *What to buy* list, and two are classed as **Best Buys** (see *What to buy*, far right).

SIZE MATTERS

There can be a catch with front loaders, though. Our testers found the 7.5 kg **ARISTON** and the two 7 kg **SAMSUNG** front loaders were particularly difficult to load to their maximum capacities. So much so, in fact, that they had trouble getting their hands back out once they’d squeezed in the last item of the full-size test load!

For comparison, we asked a small group of ordinary users to load the **ARISTON** (the most difficult to load of the three) until they thought it was full. The average amount loaded into the machine was a mere 43% of the claimed capacity — only 3.2 kg.

Our test results show that even when loaded to the claimed capacity it performs well. So to get the best water, energy and cost efficiency, choose a front loader with good performance scores and fill it tightly for a normal wash. The tumbling action ensures it’ll wash well.

PHOTOS: GENE ROSS

However, we can’t say what washing at full capacity all the time will do for a machine’s reliability or durability, as all our current information about this is based on what people do in reality — which seems anecdotally and from our small study to be not to cram in the full load.

Size is also a factor concerning two of the **SIMPSON** Eziset top loaders. The 550 36S550L is claimed to have 5.5 kg capacity and the 60S 36S605L to be 6 kg. However, their external and drum dimensions are identical. So don’t let the higher-capacity claim influence you to spend the extra dollars for a ‘bigger’ machine — all you’ll get is one that takes in more water, and a time-remaining indicator.

Useful features

The table on page 44 details which machines have the following features:

- **Delay start:** Lets you set the machine to start the wash at a later time. However, we don't recommend you program it to start when you're asleep or not home.
- **Woolens/handwash programs:** Useful for those who own lots of delicates and woolens — no more handwashing required.
- **Out-of-balance correction:** Automatically detects and redistributes an out-of-balance load, either by spinning slowly before the full spin cycle or by taking in extra water. (Most top loaders take in extra water to do this.)
- **Selectable spin speed:** Lets you change the set spin speed for some programs.
- **Auto-sensing water level:** This can help you save water and energy, particularly with smaller loads.
- **Extra rinse:** Useful if you're sensitive to detergent.

- **Water-saver option:** Lets you use less water for rinsing, or reuse sudsy and/or rinse water.

Other useful features:

- **Time to go:** A display that tells you how long to go before the washing is finished.
- **Anti-crease:** Most models have a permanent-press or 'creasables' cycle designed for easily creased or pleated fabrics. Others may deal with them by not draining the last rinse water, by not spinning after the water has drained or by continuing to tumble at the end of the cycle. The only models in the table that don't have an anti-crease feature are the **HOOVER 500MD**, **NEC NW-452**, **WHIRLPOOL** top loaders and **LG WF-T65TH**.
- **Child lock on controls:** When this is set, programs can't be changed during a cycle.
- **Favourite program:** You can program your preferred wash option for future use at the touch of a button.
- **Last-program default:** The last program used becomes the default option for your next wash.

MISSING MODEL

We also tested the 7 kg **LG Intellowasher WD-8026C** front loader, but it's since been discontinued and the manufacturer tells us no stocks are available. In case you've bought one already and would like to know the results, it scored 71% overall: 63% for dirt removal, 72% for gentleness, 67% for spin efficiency, 89% for energy efficiency and 75% for water efficiency.

RINSING CLEAN

A new test for rinse effectiveness is being introduced to the Australian/New Zealand Standard for performance testing of washing machines. It's an indication of how well the machine rinses out dirt and detergent residue.

We measured the rinse effectiveness of the latest tested models according to the current draft standard, and all but two performed well. The **SAMSUNG J1045** and **J845** left a relatively high amount

of residue in the clothes. They have an extra rinse option that we didn't test but which may help.

The rinse effectiveness test goes hand-in-hand with the new water efficiency label, which will start to appear on washing machines and other water-using appliances. It looks very similar to the energy star rating label, with one to six stars plus the total water consumption for the rated program.

The rinse effectiveness test ensures that manufacturers don't skimp on the rinsing cycles to get better water star ratings. See *New water efficiency label*, page 4, for details.

WHAT TO BUY

The majority of the machines reported on in the table (page 44) were tested in the past, and our *What to buy* list and **Best Buys** change from test to test: as new machines become available, others are discontinued, plus prices change.

Best Buy indicates that a model is a reasonable performer in its size range and its combined purchase price and running costs are comparatively low. The other models listed are the overall top performers in their size bracket out of all the machines in the table, but they'll cost more to buy and/or to run than the **Best Buys**. We've included top and front loaders in each size range.

Small (up to 5.5 kg)

New	MIELE Novotronic W 502 (fr)	\$1799
	SIMPSON Esprit 4555d (fr) ◀ BEST BUY	\$849
	WHIRLPOOL AWM 5100 (fr) ◀ BEST BUY	\$849
	FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW512 (tp)	\$859
	SIMPSON Eziset 550 365550L (tp) ◀ BEST BUY	\$669

Medium (6–7 kg)

New	SAMSUNG J1045 (fr)	\$1099
New	SAMSUNG J845 (fr) ◀ BEST BUY	\$899
New	AEG Lavamat W 1250 Electronic (fr)	\$1799
	WESTINGHOUSE LT609S Complete Care (tp) ◀ BEST BUY	\$799
	HOOVER 600MD (tp) ◀ BEST BUY	\$769

Large (7.5 kg or more)

New	ARISTON AVXL 129 (fr) ◀ BEST BUY	\$1549
	LG WD-1019BD (fr)	\$1999
	FISHER & PAYKEL Intuitive Eco IW812 (tp) ◀ BEST BUY	\$1285

fr – front loader, tp – top loader

New top performers and Best Buys

For profiles of models in the *What to buy* list that aren't included here, see CHOICE, September 2003, March 2004 or September 2004, or go to www.choiceextra.com.au and click on Sep 03, Mar 04 or Sep 04 under 'washing machines' in the index.

If you're a personal subscriber to CHOICE, don't have the relevant back issue and don't have access to the internet, please phone our Consumer Services people on 1800 069 552 and ask them to send you a copy.

Up to 5.5 kg



MIELE NOVOTRONIC W 502

Price: \$1799
Front loader

The best-performing front loader in this size range (in fact the best of all machines tested), it has a quick-wash option for small loads and one-touch start. It's very easy to use and can be opened after starting the program to add an item.

6-7 kg



SAMSUNG J1045

Price: \$1099
Front loader

The best front loader in this size range has a fast-wash option for smaller loads and is very easy to use. But it has a relatively long 'normal' wash cycle time, and it's difficult to load to its claimed capacity — see *Size matters*, page 40. Its rinsing performance was also relatively poor, but it has an extra rinse option that may help (see *Rinsing clean*, page 41).



SAMSUNG J845

Price: \$899 **BEST BUY**
Front loader

This model's the same as the **SAMSUNG J1045**, so the comments about it also apply. The only difference is its maximum spin speed — 800 rpm compared to 1000 rpm, which means slightly lower spin efficiency — and it's cheaper.



AEG LAVAMAT W 1250 ELECTRONIC

Price: \$1799
Front loader

This model's a good overall performer and very easy to use. It has last-program default (see *Useful features*, page 41) and one-touch start, plus a fast-wash cycle suitable for a full load. The manual says it's a 5.5 kg model but it's been rated at 6 kg for its energy label.

7.5 kg or larger



ARISTON AVXL 129

Price: \$1549 **BEST BUY**
Front loader

A front loader in this size bracket is rare, and this one performed well overall. It has last-program default, one-touch start and a fast-wash option for smaller loads. But it's difficult to load to its claimed capacity — see *Size matters* for more.

FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

We asked an occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre NSW to assess the washing machines for people with various disabilities.

■ **If you're a wheelchair user or have back pain**, a front loader with a wide opening and a door that opens 180° is easier to load, unload and access while sitting, especially if it's mounted on a platform so you don't have to lean down. The **ASKO Quattro W6021** and **AEG Lavamat W 1250** would be most suitable. All the newly tested front loaders (see the table for new models), the **BOSCH Maxx 1000 WFL2000** and **MAYTAG MAF1300AAW** have wide-opening doors (though the **MAYTAG** has a comparatively low dirt removal score and we wouldn't otherwise recommend it).

■ **If you're visually impaired**, you want a machine with large, well-spaced markings and good contrast, as well as good feedback such as lights or loud beeps when you press the buttons. The **FISHER & PAYKEL'S**, **SIMPSON Eziset** machines, **WESTINGHOUSE LT609S Complete Care** and **LG WF-T655TH** are good in this respect. Their controls are easy to read and operate, and you can program your favourite wash cycle and then use it just by pressing a button. The **AEG Lavamat W 1250** is the best of the front loaders.

■ **If you have problems using your hands**, make sure the door is easy to open and the detergent dispenser easy to remove if required. Look for large, raised dials with a crossbar that's easy to grip, or buttons that are easy to press. Models with one-touch start or programming minimise the need to use your hands. The **WESTINGHOUSE LT609S Complete Care** is easy to open and has a shallow and small drum to reach into. The **ASKO Quattro W6021**, **BOSCH Maxx 1000 WFL2000** and **MIELE Novotronic W 502** are suitable front loaders.

MORE INFO

For help choosing a model that'll suit you, go to www.choiceextra.com.au and 'washing machines' in the index, click on 'Compare-a-washer', then type in your requirements.



How reliable have subscribers found them?

We asked our subscribers in 2004 whether their washing machine (bought in or after 1996) had needed repair in the previous 12 months. Washing machines were one of the most unreliable appliances in our survey: overall, 15% had needed repair, with front loaders slightly more likely than top loaders. Most commonly reported were out-of-balance problems.

Differences of 8% or more between brands are meaningful. The numbers in brackets are the number of responses we received for each brand.

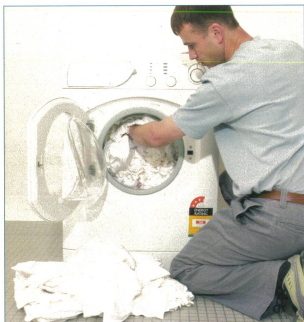
Percentage not needing repair

Miele (330)	94
Hitachi (188)	91
Bosch (191)	88
LG (616)	88
Simpson (1092)	88
Maytag (306)	87
Hoover (1255)	86
Westinghouse (176)	86
Fisher & Paykel (2894)	85
Whirlpool (957)	85
Kleenmaid (320)	80
Asko (442)	78
Ariston (158)	73
Bendix (139)	64

Notes to the table overleaf

All the machines do a cold wash except Bosch and Maytag front loaders, whose

(C) Has been changed aesthetically since we tested, but it doesn't affect the performance (SMCAPP) tested now



Looks full already? For a genuinely full load all the washing still on the floor can be fitted in (though our testers had trouble getting their hand out again after loading some of the machines).

Shop and save with CHOICE Shopper!

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is more accurate than the human eye; differences of around 6% are visible. The evenness of the wash is also taken into account.

4 Gentleness score

We attached swatches of easily frayed fabric to the garments in each load, measuring the unfrayed area of the swatch before and after the wash.

5 Spin efficiency score

We weighed the clothes before and after the wash to see how well the machine extracts water on the highest spin speed.

6 Energy efficiency score

This is calculated according to the kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity used for each kilogram of washing, including heating the water.

7 Water efficiency score/ water used

We measured the amount of water used per 'normal' wash, and calculated the amount of water used per kilogram of the test load to get a score.

8 Noise

These are the maximum noise levels recorded during the spin cycle, measured 1 m away from the machine

and 1 m above the ground. The noise level of these machines is around that of a normal conversation.

9 Features

See page 41 for an explanation of these and other useful features.

10 Tap connection

Most machines have both hot and cold water inlet hoses, and some can be connected to cold water only if you only have the one tap — but they may require a special connector, so ask when buying.

11 Capacity

This is the maximum claimed capacity of dry clothes you can wash. We tested using this claimed capacity.

12 Running costs

This is an estimate of how much it'll cost you over 10 years for water and electricity if you wash the equivalent of one load every day using a 'normal' cycle, based on 15 cents per kWh for electricity and \$1 per 1000 L for water, and including any electricity used when the machine's switched on but not in use.

		PERFORMANCE							
Brand / model (in rank order within groups)	1 Type	2 Overall score (%)	3 Dirt removal score (%)	4 Gentleness score (%)	5 Spin efficiency score (%)	6 Energy efficiency score (%)	7 Water efficiency score (%)	7 Water used (L, normal wash)	Cycle time (min, normal wash)
UP TO 5.5 KG									
# MIELE Novotronic W 502	Front	84	90	70	80	89	80	56	118
ELECTROLUX Inclined Axis EW 1055 F	Front	76	77	70	74	83	75	68	142
SIMPSON Esprit 455551D	Front	75	72	73	77	84	73	73	127
WHIRLPOOL AWM 5100	Front	75	70	74	74	83	79	57	133
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW512 (A)	Top / agitator	69	78	40	78	62	74	72	41
HOOVER 500MD (B)	Top / agitator	65	75	46	71	64	53	118	51
SIMPSON Eziset 550 365550L	Top / agitator	65	65	41	72	72	72	77	59
SAMSUNG Triflow SW56APP (C)	Top / impeller	61	78	58	65	33	40	164	70
NEC NW-452	Top / impeller	56	60	58	56	62	36	145	45
6 KG TO 7 KG									
# SAMSUNG J1045	Front	81	85	71	76	85	83	60	134
# SAMSUNG J845	Front	80	85	71	70	85	83	58	135
# AEG Lavamat W 1250 Electronic	Front	79	79	73	79	89	76	72	115
AEG Lavamat W 1050 Electronic	Front	77	71	76	82	90	76	71	118
# WESTINGHOUSE LF651D Complete Care	Front	77	79	71	70	86	74	84	119
WHIRLPOOL 6th Sense AWM 8121	Front	77	74	69	85	82	83	60	112
ASKO Quattro W6231	Front	76	70	74	80	86	78	65	151
BOSCH Maxx 1000 WFO 2060	Front	76	71	70	75	90	81	62	146
ASKO Quattro W6021	Front	75	70	68	80	87	81	57	108
BOSCH Maxx 1000 WFL 2000	Front	74	69	70	73	90	76	77	126
MAYTAG MAF 1300 AAW	Front	72	59	72	79	87	85	51	105
WESTINGHOUSE LT6095 Complete Care	Top / agitator	70	78	50	71	68	71	86	57
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW612 (A)	Top / agitator	68	75	50	81	71	53	154	42
FISHER & PAYKEL Intuitive Eco IW712 (A)	Top / agitator	68	72	42	77	85	58	149	50
HOOVER 600MD (B)	Top / agitator	68	78	44	65	74	60	120	50
SIMPSON Eziset 605 365605L	Top / agitator	65	65	45	71	74	72	85	61
SAMSUNG Triflow SW66ASP (C)	Top / impeller	63	73	54	58	62	53	153	58
# LG WF-1655TH	Top / impeller	60	67	59	56	60	49	165	57
7.5 KG OR LARGER									
# ARISTON AVXL 129	Front	77	75	72	74	87	80	76	128
LG WD-10198D	Front	76	76	68	73	89	77	113	119
FISHER & PAYKEL Intuitive Eco IW812 (A)	Top / agitator	72	74	54	84	86	56	177	54
WESTINGHOUSE LT955S Complete Care	Top / agitator	69	71	60	75	68	70	141	72
FISHER & PAYKEL Excellence GW712 (A)	Top / agitator	68	69	54	86	72	55	168	45
SIMPSON Eziset 800 225800L	Top / agitator	68	71	42	79	71	71	114	71
SIMPSON Eziset 805 225805L	Top / agitator	68	71	42	79	71	71	114	71
WESTINGHOUSE LT8095 Complete Care	Top / agitator	68	64	58	77	73	72	110	66
HOOVER 750LD (B)	Top / agitator	63	70	46	68	49	49	189	61
HOOVER 800RLD (B)	Top / agitator	63	65	50	72	69	53	186	62
# WHIRLPOOL 6ALS08255MW	Top / agitator	61	62	58	64	64	58	158	40
# WHIRLPOOL 6ALS08000MW	Top / agitator	61	62	58	64	64	58	158	40
# WHIRLPOOL 6ALSRL744MW	Top / agitator	61	62	58	64	64	58	158	40
MAYTAG Performa PAV 3300 AGW	Top / agitator	56	46	48	69	65	68	130	49

Newly tested models.

Square brackets indicate technically similar models.

9 FEATURES							SPECIFICATIONS						COSTS	
Delay start (hours)	Woolens / handwash cycle	Out-of-balance correction	Selectable spin speed	Auto-sensing water level	Extra rinse	Water-saver option	10 Tap connection	11 Capacity (kg)	Dimensions (H x W x D, cm)*	Warranty (years)†	Origin	Manufacturer / distributor	12 Running costs (\$ / 10 years)	Price (\$)‡
1-24	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	5.5	85 x 60 x 58	2	Germany	Miele	473	1799
	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	5.5	85 x 60 x 62	2	Italy	Electrolux	671	1109
	✓ / -	✓	✓			✓	H & C, C	5.5	85 x 60 x 57	2	Italy	Electrolux	654	849
Up to 9	✓ / ✓	✓	✓				H & C, C	5.5	85 x 60 x 58	2	Italy	Whirlpool	627	849
1, 3, 9	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	5.5	105 x 56 x 56	2	Australia	Fisher & Paykel	1206	859
	✓ / -						H & C, C	5	99 x 58 x 61	2	Australia	Electrolux	1220	639
	✓ / -			ns		✓	H & C, C	5.5	101 x 58 x 63	2	Australia	Electrolux	947	669
3-18	✓ / -	ns	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	5.5	101 x 60 x 66	2	Korea	Samsung	2255	599
2-48	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓			H & C, C	4.5	85 x 53 x 61	2	Korea	NEC	1307	499
3-24	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	7	84 x 60 x 55	2	China	Samsung	733	1099
3-24	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	7	84 x 60 x 55	2	China	Samsung	720	899
	✓ / ✓	ns	✓	✓	✓		C only	6	85 x 60 x 60	3	Germany	Andi Co	559	1799
	✓ / ✓	ns	✓	✓	✓	✓	C only	6	85 x 60 x 60	3	Germany	Andi Co	520	1599
	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	6.5	85 x 60 x 57	2	Italy	Electrolux	704	999
	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	7	86 x 60 x 60	2	Italy	Whirlpool	764	1299
Up to 5	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	(D)	✓	C only	6	85 x 60 x 59	2	Sweden	Asko	599	1999
Up to 19	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	C only	6.5	86 x 60 x 59	2	Thailand	Bosch	518	1499
	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	(D)		C only	6	85 x 60 x 59	2	Sweden	Asko	599	1799
	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		C only	6.5	86 x 60 x 59	2	Thailand	Bosch	575	1099
Up to 24	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	ns	✓		H & C, C	7	85 x 60 x 60	2	UK	Maytag	599	1499
1-23	✓ / -	ns	✓	✓		✓	H & C, C	6	103 x 58 x 63	2	Australia	Electrolux	1148	799
1, 3, 9	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	6.5	102 x 60 x 62	2	Australia	Fisher & Paykel	1397	995
0.25-18	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	7	101 x 60 x 63	2	Australia	Fisher & Paykel	1027	1185
	✓ / -						H & C, C	6	100 x 58 x 64	2	Australia	Electrolux	1115	769
	✓ / -			ns		✓	H & C, C	6	101 x 58 x 63	2	Australia	Electrolux	1005	719
3-18	✓ / -			✓	✓		H & C, C	6.5	101 x 69 x 71	1	Korea	Samsung	1685	749
3-48	✓ / -	ns		✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	6.5	93 x 59 x 61	2	Thailand	LG	1763	799
2, 4, 6, 9	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓			H & C, C	7.5	85 x 60 x 57	2	Italy	Ariston	748	1549
3-19	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	ns	H & C, C	10	109 x 69 x 75	3	Korea	LG	909	1999
0.25-18	✓ / ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	8	100 x 65 x 65	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1169	1285
1-23	✓ / ✓	ns	✓	✓		✓	H & C, C	9.5	107 x 68 x 73	2	Australia	Electrolux	1843	1269
1, 3, 9	✓ / -	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	H & C, C	7.5	100 x 65 x 65	2	NZ	Fisher & Paykel	1563	1075
	✓ / -			ns		✓	H & C, C	8	107 x 68 x 73	2	Australia	Electrolux	1430	1009
	✓ / -			ns		✓	H & C, C	8	107 x 68 x 73	2	Australia	Electrolux	1430	1109
1-23	✓ / -	ns	✓			✓	H & C, C	8	107 x 68 x 73	2	Australia	Electrolux	1338	1059
	✓ / -	✓				✓	H & C, C	7.5	104 x 68 x 72	2	Australia	Electrolux	1743	949
	✓ / -	✓					H & C, C	8	105 x 68 x 72	2	Australia	Electrolux	1791	1009
	✓ / ✓					✓	H & C, C	7.5	109 x 69 x 65	2	USA	Whirlpool	1752	1049
	✓ / ✓					✓	H & C, C	7.5	109 x 69 x 65	2	USA	Whirlpool	1752	999
	✓ / ✓						H & C, C	7.5	109 x 69 x 65	2	USA	Whirlpool	1752	999
	✓ / -	✓	✓	ns			H & C, C	8	112 x 69 x 69	2	USA	Maytag	1685	1299



COMING TO A GREENGROCER NEAR YOU ...

... Stoneless avocados.

Even fruit and veg can be made more 'convenient'. Sainsbury's, one of the largest supermarket chains in the UK, has announced the introduction of the stoneless avocado. It's smaller than the traditional avocado, but it's claimed you get more avocado for your money, when you take into account how much room the stone takes up. Now, about those pesky passionfruit seeds ...

The verdict's in...

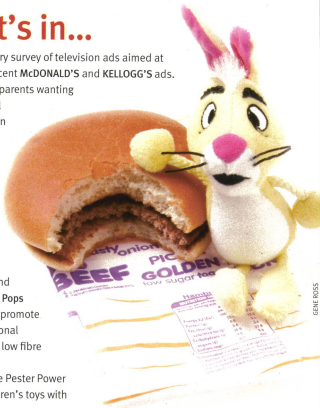
The results of a recent Parents Jury survey of television ads aimed at children slammed a couple of recent **McDONALD'S** and **KELLOGG'S** ads. The Parents Jury is composed of parents wanting to improve the food and physical activity environment of children in Australia, and is supported by Diabetes Australia (Vic), The Cancer Council of Australia and the Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity.

In the inaugural Parents Jury Advertising Awards for the best and worst children's food advertising, members voted and awarded the Smoke and Mirrors Award to **KELLOGG'S** Coco Pops and its use of Monica Trapaga to promote it as a product with a high nutritional value, despite its high sugar and low fibre content.

McDONALD'S was awarded the Pester Power Award with its promotion of children's toys with its Happy Meals.

The Parents' Choice Award for best ad went to the Federal Government's '2 fruit and 5 vegetables' ad, while the banana and apple industries and **SANITARIUM Weet-Bix** were commended for theirs.

If you're interested in finding out more about the Parents Jury go to www.parentsjury.org.au.



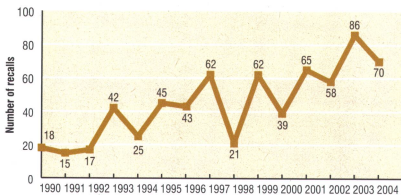
Total recall

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has released statistics on food recalls, from when the data began to be collected in 1990 to the end of 2004. The data includes recalls that occur at trade level, which is the recall of products before they reach the consumer, and consumer recalls, which recover the product from all points in the distribution chain, including any that have already been sold to the end consumer.

Over the time that the data has been collected, recalls have shown an upward trend. In 1990 there were 18, while the highest number was 86 in 2003 (see right).

The main reason for recalls 1990–2004 was microbial contamination (34% of the total), with *Listeria monocytogenes* being the primary culprit — a disturbing statistic given its potential to cause miscarriage in pregnant women. Salmonella contamination came in second. The second-highest reason for recalls at 22% was foreign objects, with metal, glass and plastic the biggest offenders.

With the introduction of mandatory warning statements for food



allergens in 2002, recalls as a result of incorrect labelling have increased to the point that in 2003 and 2004 they were the main cause of food recalls.

And we can't blame imported foods for the number of recalls: from May 1995 the recall data distinguished between local and imported foods — imports accounted for 29%.

For the latest recalls, including food, turn to page 49.

NEW TO CHOICE ...

OTHER PUBLISHERS' TITLES

SAFE PREGNANCY

A complete handbook to guide you safely through pregnancy

Beatrice Smulders and Mariel Croon

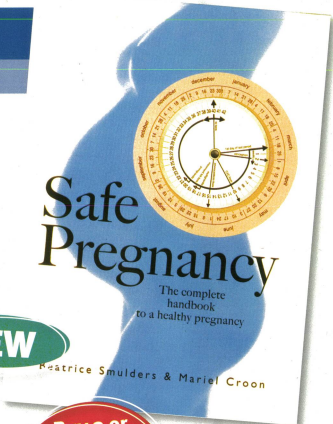
Drawing on real-life experiences as well as the latest research, *Safe Pregnancy* is an informative and up-to-date guide that answers all your questions with wisdom and humour. Accounts of other women's experiences help to reassure expecting parents and highlight the challenges and joys of pregnancy.

Get practical and detailed information on the following and more:

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- Choosing medical support.
- The changes you'll experience.
- Diet and supplements.
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- Premature and late babies.

Beatrice Smulders and Mariel Croon are internationally recognised as midwives and have many years of experience. They've written a number of bestselling titles on pregnancy and childbirth.

\$34.95 CODE: SAFE



Safe Pregnancy

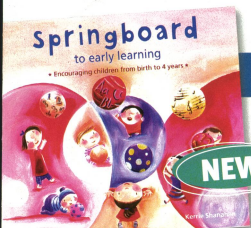
The complete handbook to a healthy pregnancy

Beatrice Smulders & Mariel Croon

NEW

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Enjoy the precious early years with your child ...



springboard to early learning

Encouraging children from birth to 4 years

NEW

SPRINGBOARD TO EARLY LEARNING

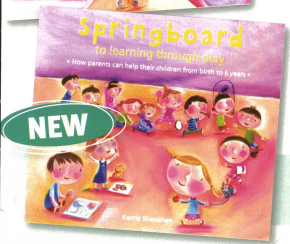
Practical suggestions on how to encourage children in enjoyable learning activities. Get valuable insights into the things a child learns in their early years — from baby to four years old — and how to foster learning.

\$22.95 CODE: SPEL

SPRINGBOARD TO LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Outlines the way children play at the different stages of their early years and what they're learning through these experiences. It'll give you ideas on how to cater for the diverse ways your child will experience everyday life. Written for children from birth to six years old.

\$24.95 CODE: SPLP



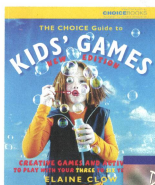
Springboard to learning through play

How parents can help their children from birth to 6 years

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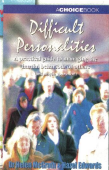
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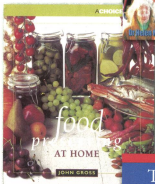
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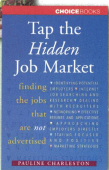
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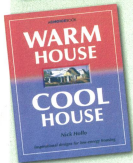
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recalls&bans

Nowadays there are so many product recalls we may not be able to print all of them in *CHOICE*. For comprehensive recall information go to the Federal Treasury website: www.recalls.gov.au. If you don't have web access, call the Consumer Safety Unit on (02) 6263 2747.

Companies often rent 1800 numbers for a couple of months after a recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

CHILD CAR SEAT: **Britax Childcare** has recalled **MaxiRider Convertible Booster Seat, series 10/A/2000**, manufactured between 17 May and 26 May 2005, with an inspection label with the number '63' at the back of the seat on the left-side bottom corner. The manufacture date can be found on the back of the seat at the top, under the pocket.

The problem: The upper anchorage strap adjuster may be incorrectly assembled, and in the event of an accident will not hold the child restraint.

What to do: Stop using it. Call 1800 806 974 between 9 am and 5 pm EST to arrange for a replacement, quoting the date of manufacture, inspection number and the serial number on the Standards Australia label.

BABY FOOD: **Only Organic** has recalled **Only Organic Pasta Bolognese Baby Food** (six months and up), 200 g glass jar with a screw-top lid, best-before date APR 2007 (located on lid), batchcode PB 96-5, distributed in Victoria.

The problem: It may contain pieces of clear, soft plastic.

What to do: Don't feed it to children. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call 1800 220 003 for more information.

WATER: **Coles** has recalled **Coles Farmland Non Carbonated Natural Spring Water**, 6 L plastic containers with best-before dates of 03/2007 and 03/3007 [sic] in the ACT, NSW, Queensland, SA, Tasmania and Victoria.

The problem: There is evidence of algae in some products, the exact nature of which is being determined. Some algae has the potential to be harmful if swallowed.

What to do: Don't drink it. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund or call 1800 061 562 for more information.

FOOD: **Coles** has recalled **Coles Garden Vegetable Pasta Sauce**, 500 g glass jar with screw-top lid, best-before date 28 APR 06, batch codes 5

and 6 (next to the best-before date on the lid), distributed in southern NSW (Albury, Deniliquin and Lavington), Victoria and Tasmania.

The problem: It may contain glass fragments.

What to do: Don't eat it. Return it to your nearest Coles store for a refund, or call 1800 061 562 for more information.

FOOD: **Wei Wah International Trading** has recalled **Lion Globe Dried Seaweed**, 50 g pack, best-before date 30 03 07, in the ACT, NSW and Queensland.

The problem: It may contain salmonella, which, if eaten, can cause symptoms including persistent vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain.

What to do: Don't eat it. Contact your doctor if you have any health concerns. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or phone (02) 9723 6622 for more information.

FOOD: **Woolworths** and **Ernest Hillier** have recalled **Homebrand Milk Chocolate Sultanas**, 300 g cellophane pack, best-before date 17MAY06, in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria.

The problem: Instead of sultanas, some packets may contain chocolate-coated peanuts, which could pose a risk to those with a peanut allergy or intolerance.

What to do: Don't eat it if you're allergic or intolerant to peanuts. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call 1800 638 434 for more information.

FOOD: **Universal Clearance Company** has recalled **Shikar Corn Pappadam Bombay Mix Flavour**, 40 g cardboard cylinder, best-before date FEB 2006, and sold through The Warehouse stores in the ACT, NSW, Queensland, Victoria.

The problem: The product may contain undeclared gluten.

What to do: Don't eat it if you have a gluten intolerance. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund, or call (02) 9725 5354 for more information.

EAR LOTION: **Artav** has recalled **Natural Look Antiseptic Ear Care Lotion**, 125 mL and 250 mL bottles, all batches, AUST R 45901.

The problem: Samples were found to be contaminated with micro-organisms.

What to do: Don't use it. Return it to the place of purchase for a refund or call 1800 805 276 for more information.

FAN/LIGHT: **Briteway International** has recalled **TurboMaster exhaust fan**, model EF, and fan light combination, model FL, imported into Australia in 2002. They can be identified by the word TurboMaster in the middle of the cover. When the diffuser cover is removed there are four mounting screws on the exhaust fan and six screws on the fan light.

The problem: A batch has been identified as a fire hazard.

What to do: Stop using them. Call Briteway on (02) 9750 0662 to arrange an inspection and replacement if required.

JACK: **Super Cheap Auto** has recalled **Super Works 1350 kg trolley jack**, model number TT604L.

The problem: It doesn't conform to the Australian standard.

What to do: Return it to your nearest Super Cheap Auto store for a refund.

TRAILER: **Libra Industries** has recalled trailers fitted with white 16 inch Sunraysia-style Landcruiser pattern rims, marked as manufactured by Mangles, Brazil.

The problem: The mounting face may have been bent during manufacture, and as a result the wheel nuts may loosen as the trailer is being towed, and the wheel may detach from the trailer.

What to do: Contact the place of purchase to arrange replacement of the wheel trims.

CAR: **DaimlerChrysler** has recalled **Mercedes-Benz vehicles, E Class type 211 and SL Class type 230**.

The problem: Malfunctions may occur with the SBC brake.

What to do: Contact your nearest dealer for more information or phone 1300 730 200.

CAR: **Peugeot** has recalled model 307, model years since July 2004, with various VIN numbers.

The problem: The floor mat may come in contact with the accelerator pedal and affect driving.

What to do: Contact your nearest Peugeot dealer to check which VIN numbers are affected, and if required to arrange for replacement of the floor mats, or phone 1800 307 607.

CAR: **Holden** has recalled **VZ series Executive, Equipe, Acclaim, SV6, SV8, SS, Berlina and Calais; VZ Wagon Executive, Equipe, Acclaim and Berlina; VZ LCV Ute, S Ute, SS Ute, One Tonner, Crewman, Crewman S and Crewman SS; WL Statesman and Caprice**. All affected makes and models were built between 10 May 2004 and 14 December 2004, with production serial numbers from L270900 to L384762 (this can be found as the last seven digits of the VIN number, which can be seen through the lower left-hand corner of the windscreen).

The problem: The front brake hose may slide out of the retaining bracket on the front strut, which could result in wear on the hose, eventual brake fluid leak and reduced brake effectiveness.

What to do: Owners not contacted by the end of June should call 1800 632 826, 8 am to 7 pm EST Monday to Friday and 9 am to 1 pm EST Saturday.

aboutchoice

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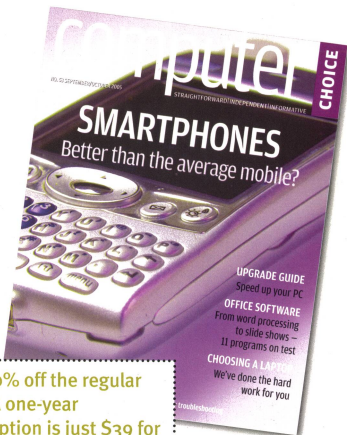
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* indicates an update of a previous report, additions or corrections to reports, small follow-up items, letters or recalls. For space reasons, the index generally doesn't include Choice Cuts and other small pieces.

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DON'T FORGET DEADLY BOX JELLYFISH!

The copywriter for this wine label is stretching a very long bow — the Murray's 'original source' is a long way from where the wine's made, and crocodiles are never found in the Murray itself. In any case, isn't it time we ditched the Crocodile Hunter/Dundee image of Australia? (This wine is destined for the US.)

CROCODILE ROCK

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HOW ABOUT A LITTLE HELP?

The prize for the best entry goes to P Howe. Thanks also to K Eagle, M Hannigan, J and C Cox, A Moyle, J Hallyer and G Davey for their contributions to this month's *Hard Word*. Please keep them coming.

If you have any examples you think deserve to be on this page, send them to *The Hard Word*, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204. Please don't email us your entries — we need the originals.